



**DELHI UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY**

## DELHI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Cl. No. V 5168-11 N5

HS

Ac. No. 57110

Date of release for loan

30 NOV 1965

This book should be returned on or before the date last stamped below. An overdue charge of 0.5 nP. will be charged for each day the book is kept overtime.

---



CIANO'S  
DIPLOMATIC  
PAPERS





# CIANO'S DIPLOMATIC PAPERS

Being a record of nearly 200 conversations held during the years 1936-42 with Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Goering, Ribbentrop, Chamberlain, Eden, Sumner Welles, Schulenburg, Lord Perth, François-Poncet; and many other world diplomatic and political figures. Together with important memoranda, letters, telegrams, etc.

EDITED BY MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

TRANSLATED BY STUART HOOD



ODHAMS PRESS LIMITED

LONG ACRE, LONDON

The original Italian edition of this work  
is entitled  
*L'Europa Verso La Catastrofe*

PUBLISHED 1948

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
BY C. TINLING & CO., LTD., LIVERPOOL, LONDON AND PRESCOT.  
T.1047P.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>INTRODUCTION</i> . . . . .	xiii

## 1936

### I

<b>SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED</b> . . . . .	3
<i>12th June—30th July</i>	
Conversations with the Diplomatic Representatives of Great Britain, France, Argentina, Turkey, Germany, Haiti, Poland, Switzerland, Austria, Rumania, Mexico and Belgium.	

### II

<b>CIVIL WAR IN SPAIN</b> . . . . .	25
<i>3rd—17th August</i>	
Conversations with the Diplomatic Representatives of France and Great Britain.	

### III

<b>LINKS WITH BUDAPEST AND VIENNA</b> . . . . .	33
<i>7th—15th September</i>	
Conversations with M. Avenol, the Hungarian Minister and the Austrian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Schmidt.	

### IV

<b>SHAPING THE AXIS</b> . . . . .	42
<i>23rd September—6th November</i>	
Conversation between the Duce and Herr Frank; with von Neurath, the Fuehrer, and the British and German Ambassadors.	

### V

<b>ITALY, AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY CONFER</b> . . . . .	63
<i>9th November—28th December</i>	
Conversations with Schuschnigg, Schmidt, Horthy, Darányi, and Kánya, and with the Ambassador of Japan, and the Yugoslav Minister.	

## CONTENTS

1937

### VI

#### GOERING PUTS HIS CASE . . . . . 75

*6th—23rd January*

Conversations with the Ambassador of Great Britain, and between the Duce and President Goering in the presence of Count Ciano.

### VII

#### AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA . . . . . 81

*4th February—26th March*

Conversations with the Turkish Foreign Minister, the Yugoslav Prime Minister and the Rumanian Minister.

### VIII

#### AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED . . . . . 106

*22nd April—22nd May*

Conversations between the Duce and Chancellor Schuschnigg, in the presence of Count Ciano; between the Duce and von Neurath; and with Darányi and Kánya.

### IX

#### LONDON UNVISITED . . . . . 121

*2nd—26th June*

Conversations with the Ambassadors of Great Britain, Turkey and Germany.

### X

#### 'VERY BENEVOLENT NEUTRALITY' . . . . . 129

*19th—31st July*

Conversations with the Ambassador of Japan.

### XI

#### MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS . . . . . 132

*15th August—2nd October*

Conversations with the Ambassadors of Great Britain and Spain and with the British *Chargé d'affaires*.

## CONTENTS

### XII

#### ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT . . . 138

*20th October—8th November*

Conversations with the Ambassadors of Japan, the Soviet Union and Brazil; and with Herr von Ribbentrop and the Duce.

### XIII

#### MANOEUVRING FOR POSITION . . . 148

*8th November—13th December*

Conversations with the Hungarian Minister, the Polish Ambassador, and M. Stoyadinovitch.

## 1938

### XIV

#### CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS EDEN . . . 157

*3rd January—19th February*

Conversations of the Duce with Count Bethlen; letter to, and report from the Italian Ambassador to London, Count Grandi; conversations with the Ambassador of Great Britain and with the Prince of Hesse.

### XV

#### CHAMBERLAIN TRIES AGAIN . . . 186

*22nd February—26th March*

Conversations with the Ambassadors of Great Britain and the United States of America.

### XVI

#### CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANSCHLUSS . . . 200

*15th April—2nd May*

Conversations with the German Ambassador and the Yugoslav Minister.

### XVII

#### EUROPEAN TENSION . . . 206

*18th May—20th August*

Conversation with the Diplomatic Representatives of Great Britain, Yugoslavia, Turkey and France; Memorandum of the

## CONTENTS

Italian Government in reply to the Note of the British Government of 20th June, 1938; conversation between the Duce and the Hungarian Prime Minister, Imrédy, and the Hungarian Foreign Minister, Kánya, in the presence of Count Ciano.

### XVIII

#### CZECHOSLOVAK CRISIS . . . . . 232

*13th September—28th November*

Conversations with the Diplomatic Representatives of Yugoslavia, Germany, Hungary, Great Britain and Rumania; telephone conversations with the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop.

### XIX

#### HITLER PROPOSES A MILITARY ALLIANCE . 242

*28th October*

Conversation between the Duce and the Foreign Minister of the Reich, von Ribbentrop, in the presence of Count Ciano.

### XX

#### ITALY AND FRANCE . . . . . 247

*9th November—2nd December*

Conversations with the French Ambassador; letter to the Ambassador in London, Grandi.

## 1939

### XXI

#### NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN IN ROME . . . . . 257

*2nd—12th January*

Conversation between the Duce and Chamberlain; letter to the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop.

### XXII

#### CIANO VISITS BELGRADE AND WARSAW . . 267

*18th January—25th February*

Report on his journeys to Yugoslavia and Poland and of his conversation with the Prime Ministers, Stoyadinovitch and Beck.

# CONTENTS

## XXIII

- THE CROATIAN QUESTION** . . . . . 276  
*17th March—7th April*  
 Conversations with the German Ambassador and the Yugoslav Minister; letters between the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, and Ciano.

## XXIV

- PACT OF STEEL** . . . . . 282  
*6th May—2nd July*  
 Conversation with the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop; telegram to the Minister in Sofia, Talamo; letter to the Ambassador in Berlin, Attolico.

## XXV

- CONVERSATION WITH FRANCO** . . . . . 289  
*19th July*

## XXVI

- SALZBURG** . . . . . 296  
*11th—13th August*  
 Conversations with the Fuehrer and with the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop.

## XXVII

- ONE LAST TRY** . . . . . 305  
*14th September—1st October*  
 Letter to Lord Halifax; conversations with the French Ambassador and with the Fuehrer.

## XXVIII

- ITALY ON THE BRINK** . . . . . 317  
*8th November—6th December*  
 Letters to the Ambassador in Berlin, Attolico, and to Lord Halifax; conversation with Dr. Ley.

## XXIX

- ATTEMPTS AT BALKAN APPEASEMENT** . . . . . 328  
*22nd December, 1939—7th January, 1940*  
 Letter to the Minister in Budapest, Vinci Gigliucci; conversations with the Foreign Ministers of Rumania and Hungary.



## CONTENTS

1940

XXX

### THE MISSION OF SUMNER WELLES TO EUROPE . 335

*24th February—16th March*

Letter to the Ambassador in Berlin, Attolico; conversations between the Duce and Sumner Welles in the presence of Count Ciano, conversations between the Reich Foreign Minister and the Duce in the presence of Count Ciano and the German Ambassador, von Mackensen.

XXXI

### THE BRENNER MEETING . . . . . 361

*18th March*

Conversation between the Duce and the Fuehrer in the presence of Count Ciano and von Ribbentrop.

XXXII

### LAST EFFORTS AT MEDIATION . . . . . 366

*1st May—8th June*

Conversations with the Duce and the United States Ambassador; letter to the Italian Ambassador in Berlin; letters to Serrano Suñer.

XXXIII

### ARMISTICE WITH FRANCE . . . . . 372

*19th June—7th July*

Conversations with von Ribbentrop and the Fuehrer.

XXXIV

### RUMANIA DISMEMBERED . . . . . 380

*20th July—9th September*

Conversations with the Fuehrer, and between the Duce and M. Gigurtu in the presence of Count Ciano; letters to the Hungarian Regent, Serrano Suñer and the Lieutenant-General in Albania, Jacomoni.

XXXV

### SPAIN AND THE AXIS. . . . . 388

*19th September—28th October*

Conversations between the Duce and von Ribbentrop; between the Duce and Serrano Suñer; between the Duce and the Fuehrer; and with the German Chargé d'affaires.

## CONTENTS

### XXXVI

#### RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA . . . . . 405

*4th November*

Conversations with the Fuehrer and von Ribbentrop; letters to the Italian Ambassador in Berlin.

1941

### XXXVII

#### MUSSOLINI MEETS FRANCO . . . . . 417

*19th January—12th February*

Conversation with von Ribbentrop; between the Duce and the Fuehrer; letters to Serrano Suñer and von Ribbentrop; conversation between the Duce and Franco.

### XXXVIII

#### CREATION OF THE CROAT STATE . . . . . 431

*25th March—30th April*

Conversations with the Fuehrer and with von Ribbentrop; letter to the Poglavnik of Croatia, Pavelic.

### XXXIX

#### MORE ATTEMPTS TO PERSUADE SPAIN . . . . . 440

*4th May—3rd June*

Letters to Serrano Suñer; conversation with von Ribbentrop.

### XL

#### RUSSIA INVADED . . . . . 445

*15th June—25th August*

Conversation with von Ribbentrop and between the Duce and the Fuehrer.

### XLI

#### 'EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY' . . . . . 453

*28th September—3rd December*

Letters to von Ribbentrop and the Italian Ambassador in Berlin; conversation with the Fuehrer; conversation between Count Ciano, the Fuehrer, Goering and von Ribbentrop; between the Duce and the Japanese Ambassador.

## CONTENTS

### XLII

#### DARLAN AND PAVELIC . . . . . 465

*10th—16th December*

Conversation with Admiral Darlan and the Poglavnik of Croatia,  
Pavelic

## 1942

### XLIII

#### THE WAR GOES ON . . . . . 477

*15th January—30th April*

Conversation with the Regent, Horthy, the Prime Minister and  
other Hungarian political personalities; letter to the Hungarian  
Prime Minister; conversation with von Ribbentrop.

#### INDEX . . . . . 485

## INTRODUCTION

THOUGH essentially a shallow and rather vulgar character, Ciano is likely to have a more vivid place in history than many of his contemporaries who seemed, when they were alive, of far greater importance. Ribbentrop's last complaint at Nuremberg before his execution, according to the American psychologist, Dr. G. M. Gilbert, was that he would be unable to write his 'beautiful memoirs'. It is doubtful, however, if the memoirs, supposing they had been written, would have been particularly beautiful, or even interesting. There is about Ribbentrop's writings a typically German heaviness, a pomposity and long-windedness which makes it extremely doubtful if he would have been able, even if given the opportunity, to write an entertaining, or even a serviceable, account of the events in which he was so deeply concerned. Those long directives which he used to send out (a good example is the long letter, dated October 3rd, 1940, which he addressed to Stalin, and which is included in the State Department publication 'Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-41') must have been deciphered with many a sigh and read with many a yawn. Ciano, on the other hand, is seldom dull. There is a sort of vivacity about him, even at his most foolish. He is somehow a character. Like Boswell, if he had been more worthy as a man, he might well have been less entertaining as a chronicler. Although so deeply involved in the lunacy of Italian Fascism's last phases, he managed somehow to maintain a fitful objectivity. Reading him one comes, in a way, rather to like him—not for anything he was or did, but because of some twist in his character; a disparity, sometimes almost as vast as in Cervantes's Knight of the Woeful Countenance, between what he was and what he purported to be.

As the Duce's son-in-law and sedulous admirer, Ciano was certain to receive promotion, but after failing as a journalist, and being only mildly successful as a diplomat, even he may well have been surprised when he was appointed Foreign Minister at the early age of thirty-three. Though his father, Constanzo Ciano, was an eminent Fascist, who had managed to acquire a very considerable fortune as well as a patent of nobility, it was quite on the cards at one point that Ciano himself might have turned against Fascism and joined the ranks of the Liberal intelligentsia. Whatever faint struggle he may have engaged in to resist acceptance of the Fascist

## INTRODUCTION

creed, when he did accept it, it was wholeheartedly. Even so, but for his marriage to Edda Mussolini, it is doubtful if much would have been heard of him. He scarcely had the makings, on his own account, of more than a subordinate.

The dynamic of his life was personal ambition, and a flamboyant taste for adventure. He had neither a religion nor a political philosophy, though there is no reason to doubt his personal courage or his devotion to what he conceived to be the interests of his country. His character was, on the whole, unedifying, and, as Foreign Minister, he was inevitably the instrument of the Duce's fluctuating purposes. Whatever he may have said in private conversation with Mr. Sumner Welles and others, there is no single recorded case in which he ventured to oppose the Duce, or even to disagree with him, to his face. If, however, he was bound in all circumstances to follow Mussolini's directions, within the strict limitations this imposed, he displayed a certain ability and shrewdness. He was from the first distrustful of the Axis policy, and felt that Italy should resist being wholly drawn into the orbit of Germany. Even so, when, after the fall of France, he thought Germany's victory was assured, he was in no way behindhand in pressing Italy's claims. At his meeting with Ribbentrop at Munich on 19th June, 1940, he indicated the generous share Italy expected to get of the immense loot which he supposed would be available for distribution in Europe, Africa and Asia, and reminded Hitler of these claims when he saw him in Berlin on 7th July, 1940.<sup>1</sup>

He was, in many ways, a typical product of this age. That he was a Fascist was more the result of his being born an Italian than anything else. If he had been a German, he would have been a Nazi; if he had been a Russian, he would have been a Communist, and the result, in the different context, would have been much the same. When there are neither religious values nor an accepted manner of behaviour to impose a moral pattern on life, all that is left is the pursuit of power as such. Into this pursuit, both in his personal and ministerial capacity, Ciano threw himself with zest and enjoyment. As long as it lasted it was thoroughly satisfying. He had no qualms whatsoever about breaking treaties, or practising deceit, or otherwise seeking through perfidy an advantage for himself or for Italy. If, on the whole, he disliked the Nazis, it was for personal reasons. There was no element of moral disapprobation in his dislike. He resented their arrogance, but did not deplore their behaviour. It never occurred to him that there was anything wrong

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter XXXIII.

## INTRODUCTION

in the use of terror as an instrument of authority—not, at any rate, until he, too, at last fell a victim to terrorism. He was as much a child of disintegration as a Frank or a Vishinsky. His Catholicism, even his occasional somewhat naïve exhibitions of snobbishness, were as unreal as Goebbels's love of culture, or the Politbureau's concern for the toiling masses. The focus of his life and thought was power. Mussolini represented power, and therefore he attached himself to Mussolini. The instrument he helped to create proved at last to be his own destroyer, but among his bitter regrets there is no trace of any sense that the pursuit of power had itself been mistaken. The only thing he minded, or that such characters ever mind, was failure. Even so, we may be grateful to him that out of vanity, or some faint residue of his early literary ambitions, he took the trouble to keep so careful a record of the affairs with which he was concerned. For those who wish to piece together the shape of this strange time, this record is, and will ever be, invaluable.

Though by the time Ciano became Foreign Minister Italy's course had already largely been set against the Western democracies, the Axis as a formal instrument remained to be forged. Marshal Badoglio's troops had entered Addis Ababa; the Negus had fled, and Mussolini, on 9th May, made the triumphant announcement that Italy had at last got the African Empire she deserved. The Abyssinian war, in which Ciano commanded a bomber squadron, was as good as over. At the Palazzo Chigi, the first task which confronted the new Foreign Minister was to deal with the political consequences of this military success. Sanctions, which had been instituted by the League of Nations in the autumn of 1935, were officially still in operation. It is true that they had never been particularly effective. The shutting of the Suez Canal and the cutting off of oil supplies, which might well have seriously impeded Italy's military operations, were not undertaken. In other words, the League Powers had alienated Italy for the sake of measures which could not, and did not, prevent the conquest of Abyssinia. This, unfortunately, was typical of their whole policy.

When the fighting was over, a move to bring to an end the show of imposing sanctions developed. Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who was to become Prime Minister in May, 1937, referred to them in a queerly mixed image, which was characteristic of his subsequent performance in the field of foreign affairs, as 'the very midsummer of madness'. The 92nd Session of the Council of the League of

## INTRODUCTION

Nations, which had on its agenda the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, was prudently postponed from 11th May to 15th June. It was obvious that a general feeling existed at Geneva in favour of accepting as an accomplished fact the defeat of the Negus's armies. What was looked for was a face-saving device to cover up the unhappy farce of the League's efforts to check an aggressor State in accordance with the obligations undertaken under Article XVI of the Covenant. Thus, no great difficulty confronted Ciano in procuring the cancellation of the feeble efforts which had been made to brand and punish Italy as a Covenant-breaking Power. Aggression in Abyssinia had proved from every point of view a complete success, and he was easily able to crown it with the approval, or, at any rate, the acquiescence, of the League States.

Looking towards Europe, a more complicated and hazardous picture presented itself. Two months before Ciano became Foreign Minister, Germany had re-occupied the Rhineland, thereby finally destroying the last vestiges of the Versailles settlement, and, what was more serious, at the same time, in effect, repudiating the freely negotiated Locarno Pact of 1925. It was clear now to all who had eyes to see that German aggression would have to be reckoned with. Mr. Eden, who had risen to fame as an earnest apostle of the League of Nations, felt bound to call the attention of his colleagues to the growing seriousness of the German danger. On 3rd March, a White Paper had been published setting forth what was proposed in the way of rearmament, and later Sir Thomas Inskip was appointed Co-ordinator of Defence—an appointment which, in the House of Commons, understandably evoked uproarious laughter, and little concern in either Rome or Berlin.

Ciano's own personal predilection, as has been said, was to sit on the fence, profiting from the fears of the Western democracies without wholly throwing in his lot with Germany. Such a policy would have been difficult to execute even if the Duce had been of the same mind. As it was, Mussolini had become increasingly intoxicated with the idea of German might, and of what he might gain by attaching Italy's fortunes to it. His mind, as we now know, was already largely made up even before he committed the supreme folly of agreeing to the Anschluss—an act which, understandably, procured him Hitler's gratitude, and involved him in a course which ended in his humiliating 'rescue' by S.S. parachutists from the hands of his own countrymen. It is just possible that exceptionally astute British statesmanship, combined with resolute and lavish rearmament, might have lured Mussolini away from the Axis. When there was confused appeasement, and a complete dis-

## INTRODUCTION

harmony between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary in their views on foreign policy, with Sir Thomas Inskip responsible for co-ordinating defence, it seemed only too obvious to Mussolini that the course of easy glory and huge profits was to go in with Germany, and so deserve a goodly share of the British Empire in the great carve up which he was confident might be expected.

Another matter which was greatly to preoccupy the Palazzo Chigi was Italian participation in the Spanish Civil War, with the attendant farce of the Non-Intervention Committee. Mussolini was intent to keep Spain as his preserve, and firmly believed, as Ciano noted at the time of Serrano Suñer's visit to Italy in July, 1939, that Franco was 'completely dominated' by his personality. The secret agreement which he signed with Franco on 28th November, 1936,<sup>1</sup> indicates the extent to which he hoped to profit from Franco's victory in the Civil War. When, however, the time came to draw on these reserves of goodwill, Franco proved recalcitrant. At the Hitler-Mussolini meeting of 28th October, 1940, the Fuehrer professed himself extremely dissatisfied over his exchanges with Franco a few days earlier at Hendaye, and asked for the good offices of the Duce in persuading the Caudillo to take a more co-operative attitude. Mussolini readily undertook the mission, particularly as, in his transactions with Hitler, the boot was usually on the other foot, with the Duce looking to the Fuehrer for help. As it happened, however, Mussolini had no better luck with Franco than Hitler. The report of their Bordighera meeting<sup>2</sup> is highly diverting, and indicates very clearly that Franco was not, at that stage, at all prepared to throw in his lot with the Axis to the point of joining them in the war. His professions of friendship and fidelity were as plentiful as his specific undertakings were scarce. As was disclosed at Nuremberg, General Jodl, in analysing the causes of German setbacks in the war, put as a major disaster Franco's refusal to agree to the transit of German troops through Spain and to undertake the capture of Gibraltar. It is, without a doubt, an ironical circumstance that, at a time when the Russians were providing the Germans with substantial assistance to win the war (Ribbentrop gives some interesting details of this in his conversations with Ciano and Mussolini in March, 1940<sup>3</sup>), Franco was responsible for putting in their way a major, and perhaps decisive, obstacle. None-the-less, a few years later Spain was regarded as a pariah among 'free' nations, and Russia as one of the pillars of

<sup>1</sup>See page 75 and following.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter XXXVII.

<sup>3</sup>See page 337 and following.



## INTRODUCTION

the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter. This curious development may well puzzle future historians when they put side by side Hitler's dealings with the Russian Government between August, 1939 and June, 1941, and his dealings with Franco as described in the Ciano Papers.

English readers of the Ciano Papers will naturally be particularly interested in the light they shed on the conduct of British foreign policy. Even now, when 'appeasement' is a word so discredited that it has almost passed out of current usage except as a term of obloquy, the full details of Mr. Chamberlain's disastrous dealings with the Italian Government make almost inconceivable reading. Mr. Churchill, in his war memoirs, is somewhat vague about what happened, doubtless because he did not wish to disparage too greatly the memory of one who was his predecessor as leader of the Conservative Party, and who became his loyal colleague in the War Cabinet. Nor has Mr. Eden ever explained the precise circumstances which led to his resignation.

Everything becomes perfectly, indeed tragically, clear with the publication in this volume of Count Grandi's despatches from London to Ciano,<sup>1</sup> describing his relations with the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. In particular there was a meeting at Downing Street on 18th February, 1938, which must have been a decisive factor in Mr. Eden's resignation two days later. The Anschluss was pending; and if ever there was a time for a show of firmness, for clarity in thought and resolution in action, it was then. Grandi himself was extremely uneasy about the situation. He fully expected that at last the confusion in British policy, which had proved so advantageous to the Axis, might now give place to decision. In any case, he was preparing himself for a difficult time, when his relations with the British Government, as he supposed, would inevitably be strained.

What happened astonished even the Italian Ambassador. He expected a rebuff, and he received a welcome from Mr. Chamberlain so overwhelming that he almost suspected there must be some trick in it. The Prime Minister received him in the company of Mr. Eden, and the two proceeded, in his presence, to engage in a heated controversy. As Grandi put it:

'Chamberlain and Eden were not a Prime Minister and a Foreign Minister discussing with the Ambassador of a foreign

✓ <sup>1</sup>See Chapter XIV:

## INTRODUCTION

Power a delicate situation of an international character. They were—and revealed themselves as such to me in defiance of all established convention—two enemies confronting each other, like two cocks in true fighting posture. The questions and queries addressed to me by Chamberlain were all, without exception, intentionally put with the aim of producing replies which would have the effect of contradicting and overthrowing the bases of argument on which Eden had evidently previously constructed, or by which he had attempted to justify, his miserable anti-Italian and anti-Fascist policy in opposition to Chamberlain and before his colleagues in the Cabinet.'

Lest there should be any doubt in Grandi's mind as to what was intended, the Prime Minister's own confidential man was sent to reassure him. Grandi describes a fantastic meeting they had in a taxi. Mr. Chamberlain, that is to say, by-passed his own Foreign Secretary, and, in a fatuous effort to appease the aggressors, made war certain.

In that taxi, had they but known it, the personal emissary of Chamberlain and the representative of Mussolini ensured that the conflict they were endeavouring to avert would infallibly take place, to the ruin of all concerned.

Even now, when the consequences are so bitterly present, it is difficult to believe that anyone exercising the high responsibilities of Prime Minister could have been so utterly misguided as was Chamberlain. It is doubtful if, in the whole course of this country's history, anything has cost the British people so dear as his unhappy incursion into the unfamiliar realm of foreign affairs. The fact that his intentions were so entirely honourable, and his mood so entirely sincere, cannot palliate the enormity of the harm he unwittingly inflicted on his country. It is still sometimes suggested by ideologues of the Left that Chamberlain was engaged in a Machiavellian conspiracy to turn German aggression eastwards, and save the British Empire by sacrificing the Soviet Union. Actually, there is not a scrap of evidence to sustain any such proposition. The fact is, Chamberlain had no policy at all. He really believed, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that an assurance from Hitler was reliable, and that it was possible to win over Mussolini with kind words and complaisant actions. On this point, Grandi's dispatches are entirely convincing. If ever a great empire fell at a critical moment into fatuous and guileless hands, it was on this occasion. The Duce was looking only for indications of some counterforce to the German pressure which would shortly reach the Brenner Pass. He was met with the maundering goodwill of a Mayor of Birmingham addressing a Rotary lunch.

## INTRODUCTION

In the present troubled international situation, following upon six years of ruthlessly destructive war, and a still unconcluded peace, it is pertinent to ask whether the lesson of these terrible transactions has even yet been fully learnt. If there are any who still believe that broken undertakings are best mended by concluding new ones, that the pursuit of power is best checked by making concessions, that war can be prevented by withdrawing before the threat of force, and that unreason will be pacified by persistent reasonableness, let them read in Ciano's Papers the melancholy tale of the essays of this sort made between 1936 and 1939, and then consider what the consequences have been in suffering and deprivation and destruction. What failed so conspicuously in the Palazzo Chigi will also fail in the Kremlin. Before aggression there are only two courses possible; to surrender or to resist. To attempt, as the unfortunate Chamberlain did, a middle course of appeasement, invited all the consequences of surrender, with the certainty that resistance would, at last, still be inevitable when its chances of succeeding were enormously diminished, and its cost in life and treasure enormously enhanced.

In Ciano's Diary there are frequent references to memoranda filed elsewhere. The substance of these 'pièces justificatives', as Professor Namier calls them in his *Diplomatic Prelude*, was not, in the great majority of cases, repeated in the Diary entries. Thus, there are important gaps in Ciano's day by day account of his conduct of Italian foreign policy. Some of the memoranda in question appeared serially in the *Corriere della Sera*. Later, the whole collection was published in Italy in a volume entitled 'L'Europa verso la Catastrofe' on which this English edition is based. Certain changes have been made to suit English readers, but the system of chronological order has been retained, with explanatory matter where it is necessary to provide a coherent narrative.

In conjunction with the Diary, the Papers provide a complete picture of the development of Italian foreign policy in the heyday of the Axis. They go back to 1936, whereas the Diary so far published only begins in 1939. Thus the Papers cover, as the Diary does not,<sup>1</sup> the three crucial years before the war's outbreak. They comprise some 200 documents, and are, for the most part,

<sup>1</sup>Ciano began to write his Diary in June, 1936, when he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. The earlier portion has been published in Italy (*Diario*—1937-39. Cappelli), and will doubtless in due course be made available in this country.

## INTRODUCTION

minutes of conversations which Ciano had, or was present at, with various foreign statesmen and diplomats, and of reports, telegrams and other correspondence which passed between the Italian Foreign Office and Italian diplomats abroad. There are certain tantalizing gaps—for instance, between 23rd September and 22nd October, 1938, during the period of the Munich Conference. Whereas the Diary continues until Ciano's dismissal in February, 1943, and even includes an entry during the period of his imprisonment at Genoa shortly before he was executed, the Papers only provide the scantiest documentation for 1941-42, when they end. There is very little about the Anschluss, and little about the Munich negotiations. When the meeting, already referred to, between Mussolini and Franco took place at Bordighera on 12th February, 1941, Ciano himself was away on three months active service at the time, so the report must have been prepared by another hand, perhaps by the Duce himself.

The Papers are naturally less outspoken, less personal than the Diary, which, in theory at any rate, was intended only for Ciano's private eye. Actually, as we now know, Mussolini was aware of the Diary's existence, and so was Mr. Sumner Welles, to whom Ciano read an extract from it in the course of their interview on 26th February, 1940. Mr. Welles, in his *The Time for Decision*, records how Ciano 'took out of a safe his famous red diary in which he recorded in his own handwriting his daily activities.' The Papers, on the other hand, were for the official record, and, though highly confidential, were available for inspection. On the whole, they present a more formal Ciano than the Diary. In his Diary entries Ciano was particularly concerned to be pungent and original and personal; in the Papers the impression he seeks to convey is more that of a statesman, serious and understanding. There is, inevitably, a certain amount of overlapping. When, as in the case of the official record of his Warsaw visit in February, 1939, Ciano was particularly pleased with the way a report was written, he was liable to include it almost verbatim in the Diary.

Confirmation of the authenticity of the Papers was provided at Nuremberg, where they were several times referred to, though usually in summarized or incomplete texts. Some of the same ground is covered in the correspondence between Mussolini and Hitler, part of which has been published in Italy. It would be a mistake, however, to regard the Papers as completely reliable and objective just because they were intended for the official archives. Reporting is, in all conceivable circumstances, done with an eye to the reader or readers for whom it is primarily intended—in Ciano's case, Mussolini. Under totalitarian conditions even

## INTRODUCTION

archives are liable to provide grounds for a charge of lack of zeal, or even unorthodoxy—which means disloyalty. Totalitarian reporting, therefore, tends to be as obsequious as totalitarian oratory. Anyone who reads, side by side, Ciano's account (which, incidentally, he knew he would have to pass to Ribbentrop), of his conversations with Mr. Sumner Welles, and Mr. Welles's account of the same conversations, will see what I mean. Ciano gives the impression that he received his American visitor haughtily, and that in all he said Mr. Welles showed a becoming sense, in particular, of Ciano's importance as Italian Foreign Minister, and, in general, of Italy's might as a Great Power. Mr. Welles's account, on the other hand, suggests that Ciano was distinctly apologetic, and went out of his way to be vehemently anti-German and even critical of the Duce. The Diary account is a little nearer Mr. Welles's, but not much. By the same token, Grandi's dispatches from London describing his encounters with Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Eden would be written with a view to ingratiating himself with Ciano, and above all with Ciano's father-in-law. They would naturally stress Mr. Chamberlain's complaisance and Mr. Eden's obduracy, because that was how the Duce wished the situation in London to be. Grandi had to be shown as calling the tune, not only to satisfy his personal vanity, but also because Mussolini had to be made to feel that his representative in London could call the tune.

Even so, when all this is said, and due correctives are made, the fact remains that the Papers do indubitably convey the authentic climate of the Palazzo Chigi under Ciano, and the process whereby the Duce became finally and fatally entangled in his own Axis policy. No one can afford to neglect them who wishes to understand how and why the war of 1939-45 came to pass. They are indispensable, both because of the light they shed on the principal characters who appear in them—Mussolini, Hitler, Ribbentrop, Franco, Ciano himself, Chamberlain and Eden, as well as a host of miscellaneous Balkan figures—and because, more cogently, perhaps, than anything hitherto published they expose the futility of the misguided, if well-meaning, efforts of the Western democracies to detach Italy from Germany. The whole, sad picture of pre-war Europe is contained in them—appeasers and appeased moving with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy to a common ruin.

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE.

1936



# I

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

12th June—30th July, 1936.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH CHARGÉ d'AFFAIRES.

*Rome, 12th June, 1936—XIV*

I received the French Chargé d'affaires,<sup>1</sup> who brought me greetings from the Ambassador, Chambrun,<sup>2</sup> who is in Paris.

Ambassador Chambrun had taken the opportunity to instruct him to tell me that he is engaged in negotiations about which he will inform me next Thursday, and that he hopes to obtain a favourable result.

Apparently the Ambassador had also told his Chargé d'affaires that the Stresa Conference has been postponed.

I have asked Cerruti<sup>3</sup> for confirmation on this point.

P.S.—Telephoned to Cerruti, who, having consulted Léger<sup>4</sup> says that his information is that the Conference is still called for the 22nd June.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE ARGENTINIAN AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 15th June, 1936—XIV*

I received M. Cantilo,<sup>5</sup> Argentinian Ambassador, to whom I made a statement similar to that made by order of the Duce to Grandi concerning his conversation today with Vansittart, and relating to the memorandum which will be sent to Geneva.<sup>6</sup>

M. Cantilo drew my attention to the following:

<sup>1</sup>Jules Blondel, later Minister to Sofia; from 1st December, 1942, Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs in de Gaulle's National Committee of Liberation in London; August, 1945 appointed French Ambassador to Oslo.

<sup>2</sup>Count Louis Charles de Chambrun, French Ambassador to Rome from 1934 to 30th October, 1936.

<sup>3</sup>Vittorio Cerruti, Italian Ambassador to Paris from 1935 to October, 1938.

<sup>4</sup>Alexis Léger, Secretary-General at the Quai d'Orsay from March, 1933 to 18th May, 1940.

<sup>5</sup>José María Cantilo, Argentinian Ambassador to Rome from 1933.

<sup>6</sup>An allusion to the Italian note sent to the President of the League of Nations Assembly the following June, which recapitulated the causes of the Abyssinian campaign, the measures taken in favour of the natives and stated the Italian Government's intention of resuming collaboration with the League at the earliest possible moment.



## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

1. That it would be advisable to make some reference in the memorandum to the Saavedra Lamas<sup>1</sup> Treaty.

I told him that, while I reserved the right to decide on this point, there was no obstacle (in fact, in the version at present being drawn up there is such a reference).

2. He again spoke of the advisability of nominating a commission to keep contact with the Italian Government for the examination of any documents sent to Geneva on operations in Abyssinia.

He insisted strongly on the necessity of finding a delaying formula whereby the South American countries could avoid linking the question of non-recognition with the concrete problem of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

On this point I gave no definite answer. I did, however, exclude the possibility of our accepting any commission on the spot.

M. Cantilo leaves for London on Friday, to make contact with the second delegate, M. Malbron.

During his stay in London he again hopes to meet His Excellency Count Grandi, to whom he could give further information.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE TURKISH AMBASSADOR

15th June, 1936—XIV

I received the Turkish Ambassador, who returned my visit and used the occasion to call attention to the advisability of our participation in the Montreux Conference. He said that Turkey would be content with a formula which, without committing us in any way, would give the impression that we were formally participating.

I told him that our abstention from the Montreux Conference is a result of the situation in which Italy has been placed by the judicial error at Geneva.

I repeated that, until sanctions have been lifted and justice done, Italy will abstain from any form of international collaboration.

The Turkish Ambassador, who was extremely anxious for our intervention, insisted further and asked me to call the Duce's attention once again to the extreme importance which the Turkish Government attaches to our presence.

I gave him no ground for hope.

<sup>1</sup>Carlos Saavedra Lamas, Argentinian Foreign Minister since 1932, promoter of the pact of non-aggression and conciliation concluded on 10th October, 1933, between Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay.—The Italian note of 29th June contained in fact the following reference to that pact: "The Italian Government declares that it is ready *once more* to collaborate effectively with the League of Nations. . . . It is in this spirit that Italy has, among other things, adhered to the Rio de Janeiro Treaty of 10th October, 1933."

# CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR

*Rome, 16th June, 1936—XIV*

I received the British Ambassador,<sup>1</sup> to whom I repeated what Grandi<sup>2</sup> had said to Vansittart<sup>3</sup> on the subject of the memorandum to be sent to the Assembly.

Sir Eric Drummond told me:

(a) that, as far as sanctions are concerned, he believes they can be abolished.

(b) that it is not possible, on the other hand, to count on immediate recognition of the Empire.

He spoke of a commission at Geneva which is to be given the task of studying the Italian documents and which will have no other purpose than to allow time to pass and thus facilitate recognition itself.

The similarity between his arguments and those of the Argentinian Ambassador (who had called earlier in the day) leads one to think that the two Ambassadors had come to an agreement between themselves.

# CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 18th June, 1936—XIV*

I received the German Ambassador<sup>4</sup> who, on his return from Berlin, paid me his courtesy visit.

He stressed that in Berlin he found a very favourable attitude to collaboration with Italy, an attitude common to all circles, from leaders of the Government and of the Party to the military chiefs.

The recent victories in East Africa have—in his opinion—made a profound impression on the German people.

The Ambassador told me that it was clouded only by a widespread suspicion in Berlin that Italy might be working to facilitate the Habsburg restoration. He considered he had been able to counter this state of mind by stating that from his conversations in Rome he had gained the impression that Italy was not working in this direction. I confirmed this.

He asked me to explain the despatch of the Italian note to Geneva. I repeated more or less the same statement as that already

<sup>1</sup>Sir Eric Drummond, later Lord Perth, British Ambassador to Rome from 1933 to 1939.

<sup>2</sup>Dino Grandi, Italian Ambassador to London from 1932 to July, 1939.

<sup>3</sup>Sir Robert, later Lord Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office from 1930 to 1938.

<sup>4</sup>Ulrich von Hassell, German Ambassador to Rome from September, 1932, to March, 1938. Involved in anti-Nazi conspiracies and arrested after the abortive attempt on Hitler's life of 20th July, he was sentenced to death and executed on 8th September, 1944.

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

made to the other diplomatic representatives who had questioned me on the subject.

The German Ambassador told me that in Berlin the question had been raised whether German recognition of the Empire would be more opportune now, or, on the other hand, more convenient later on. In general, German opinion inclined towards the second solution.

*On the very day of the conversation with the German Ambassador, Anthony Eden<sup>1</sup> informed the House of Commons that the British Government had decided on 17th June to move at Geneva the abolition of sanctions against Italy. He added, however, that the mutual assistance agreements would remain in force even after the event, as long at least as the period of uncertainty following that step might last. This, evidently, is the obscure point to which Chambrun referred in the following conversation.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 24th June, 1936—XIV

Today I received the French Ambassador, who arrived yesterday evening in Rome.

He immediately began to speak to me about the abolition of sanctions and stressed that, while Eden's speech contained some obscure points, there would be none in M. Delbos's<sup>2</sup> speech.

He said that the reason France had not taken the initiative in the abolition of sanctions was to prevent the British Government, to save its face at home, from throwing the responsibility on to the French Government and the French people. He asked me what we intended to do at the next meetings at Geneva; I then briefly explained what I had already communicated to the other Ambassadors on the subject of the memorandum we will send to the Assembly.

He spoke of the Mediterranean Agreements.

I then asked him his opinion on the agreements reached by the putting into force of Article 16. In spite of what he had said before about Delbos's speech he was unable to go further and say that France considers such agreements to be at once nullified by the abolition of sanctions. After some reticence he admitted that France considers them more or less operative until a new agreement is reached in which Italy too would participate. I did not hide from him in the least my disappointment at his point of view, and added that the first condition for beginning to consider the possibility of

<sup>1</sup>Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary from November, 1935 to 20th February, 1938.

<sup>2</sup>Yvon Delbos, French Foreign Minister from June, 1936 to March, 1938.

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

a new Mediterranean agreement was to clear away past agreements which, having been concluded in order to put pressure on Italy, cannot be considered by us with anything but hostility.

Chambrun insisted that France had adhered to these agreements only to make England's action 'collective' instead of 'individual' and to avoid greater complications.

He finished the conversation by saying that he had received instructions from M. Delbos to inform us that he desires relations between France and Italy to be increasingly cordial, that this accord has a practical and concrete basis, and finally to guarantee that the French Government will not raise questions affecting internal politics or party matters.

The Ambassador, while stating that in future he would maintain contact solely with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed to me the wish to be received in audience by the Duce.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE MINISTER FOR HAITI.

*Rome, 25th June, 1936—XIV*

The Minister for Haiti, M. Laraque, visited me and made the following statement:

'Our attitude at Geneva was entirely due to a personal error on the part of our delegate who, in the absence of instructions from his Government, initiated a policy of racial solidarity with the Abyssinians, which the people of Haiti rejects.'

He then expressed the wish to present formal apologies in the name of his Government, and to declare that in future it will be ready to make any gesture that would make amends for the harm wrought by its delegate.

*On 26th June the Council of the League of Nations met, but only to adjourn again in view of the forthcoming meeting of the Assembly, which had been fixed for the 30th. On that occasion the Polish Foreign Minister, Beck, presented a note from his Government expressing the view that the application of sanctions had proved futile and that therefore nothing remained but to record the fact.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE POLISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 27th June, 1936—XIV*

The Polish Ambassador<sup>1</sup> called and informed me that in Warsaw today the Cabinet decided to abolish sanctions immediately. Orders have already been given to implement this measure and it is expected that in a few days time sanctions will have been done away with.

<sup>1</sup>Boleslav Wienawa.

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

I did not fail to express to the Polish Ambassador our lively pleasure at this gesture, as well as at the statement made yesterday at Geneva.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR

*Rome, 29th June, 1936—XIV*

Chambrun came to see me and asked for further details on the note sent by us to Geneva.

I let him read the last two paragraphs.

He stated that the tone of our note and the contents of it had created a very favourable impression at Geneva.

He then gave the French point of view on a possible reform of the Covenant. In short, Chambrun's idea, which he expresses in a purely personal capacity and not as an official assignment from his Government, would be to limit the reform to the interpretation of certain articles. In practice it would mean the formation of regional military aid pacts, supplemented by the general application of economic and financial sanctions.

I, for my part, told him that we had not yet undertaken a study of the reform of the Covenant but had confined ourselves to noting, on the basis of those reports which had appeared, the various points of view of the Governments which had already spoken on the subject. The view expressed by the Chilean Government, and already supported by other governments, on the localisation of the conflict, seemed to us not without interest.

M. Chambrun continued the conversation by asking me persistently whether any political and military agreements had lately been reached between us and Germany. I denied it, without however, concealing that the way in which the present situation had developed, particularly because of the actions of England and France, had led to many cases of mutual understanding between the two peoples.

Chambrun insisted strongly on the necessity of finding a way of re-establishing relations with Italy in a more intimate form, repeating several times a personal idea of his that in Europe 'horizontal' agreements bring peace, while 'vertical' ones would inevitably lead to war.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR

*Rome, 29th June, 1936—XIV*

This evening I received von Hassell who told me—in strict confidence and with the request to bring it to the notice of the Duce personally—that the Fuehrer had instructed him to inform us that when the question of recognition is considered ripe he will

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

be willing to give it favourable consideration at once, and without asking us for any equivalent.

I naturally thanked von Hassell for his communication and told him that it constituted a new contribution to good Italo-German relations.

I drew the attention of von Hassell to the speech made in Paris by Mr. Duff Cooper<sup>1</sup> and informed him what the Duce said to me two days ago. This greatly impressed von Hassell, who said he himself had already noted the unmistakable import of Duff Cooper's speech.

I finally allowed von Hassell to read the last part of our note, which he fully approved.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE SWISS MINISTER.

*Rome, 30th June, 1936—XIV*

I summoned the Swiss Minister, whom I addressed in a very sharp tone, in accordance with instructions received from the Duce.

He attempted to justify the Swiss attitude by saying that a unilateral gesture, similar to that made by Poland, would have caused Switzerland to lose all the influence which she still exerts at Geneva and which could be used towards the solution of the problem of sanctions. However, the arguments put forward by M. Ruegger were very weak, and I did not fail to dispose of them appropriately.

The Swiss Minister was impressed and told me he will cable Motta<sup>2</sup> at once and that it is his fervent desire that a Swiss gesture might remove from the Duce's mind resentment against his country.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 30th June, 1936—XIV*

The British Ambassador visited me. I took the occasion to allow him to read the note sent to Geneva.

Sir Eric Drummond approved it and told me that in his opinion it would help greatly to smooth the way.

<sup>1</sup>Alfred Duff Cooper (later Sir Duff Cooper), Secretary of State for War from 1935 to May, 1937, then First Lord of the Admiralty in the Chamberlain Cabinet from 1937 to 1938. In the speech delivered in Paris after a banquet held in his honour by the Anglo-French Association on the evening of 25th June, he had said that Anglo-French friendship was a matter of life and death for the two countries, and had made a clear reference to the common frontiers of Britain and France. The speech produced a tremendous effect, occasioned reactions in Germany and led to debates in both Houses of Parliament from which it emerged that the text of the speech had been read and approved beforehand by the Foreign Office.

<sup>2</sup>M. G. Motta, Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs.

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

I took note of his statement but pointed out that the intervention of the Negus in the debates of the Assembly constituted a new obstacle. It had created a painful impression on the Italian Government and people. The delegations responsible at Geneva must, however, realise the gravity of the affair and prevent any demonstration which might appear outrageous to Italy and which might have serious consequences here.

Sir Eric Drummond replied that he took note of our reaction, that, for his part, he advised us to ignore the intervention of the Negus which had not been of importance, and that he had cabled to his delegation asking them to avoid demonstrations favourable to the ex-Emperor of Ethiopia.

*Contrary to the soothing forecasts of the British Ambassador in Rome, the opening session of the League Assembly, called to decide upon the revocation of sanctions against Italy, was tempestuous and discordant. The session began with the reading of the Italian note already mentioned, which ended with the suggestion to remove, without further delay, 'the obstacles which have prevented and continue to prevent Italy from putting into practice the international collaboration which she sincerely desires'—a clear reference to the concentration of the Home Fleet in the Mediterranean, to the mutual assistance pacts and to sanctions. The Assembly then listened with considerable interest to the views expressed by the Argentinian Ambassador to the Quirinal, and this speech was immediately followed by the theatrical though not entirely unexpected entry of Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia. The appearance of the Negus caused a veritable uproar. The Italian journalists present began to whistle, Titulescu, the Rumanian Minister, shouted to the President of the Assembly, van Zeeland: 'In the name of justice, silence these savages!'<sup>1</sup> and supporters and opponents of sanctions exchanged insults until finally the Geneva police intervened and ten of the Italian journalists were arrested. On 10th July, the Assembly repealed sanctions with 49 votes against one (Ethiopia). South Africa, Chile, Panama and Venezuela abstained, and the Mexican delegate was not present when the vote was taken. Since unanimity had not been achieved the Assembly's decision had only the force of a recommendation; the member states were under no statutory obligation to shape their policies in accordance with it.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE SWISS MINISTER.

Rome, 2nd July, 1936—XIV

I brought to the notice of the Swiss Minister the gravity of keeping under arrest the Italian journalists arrested yesterday in

<sup>1</sup>On 2nd July *Le Temps* published a somewhat milder version according to which Titulescu had merely said: 'Cessez ces procédés de sauvages!'

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

the Assembly chamber; I did not fail to point out to him first that their action, which took place as the result of a series of very grave provocations, was in no way of such a nature as to come under article 43 of the Federal Code.

I told M. Ruegger that in the interests not only of good relations between Italy and Switzerland, but also of the League of Nations itself, it was necessary for the incident of the journalists to be disposed of by taking immediate steps for their release. I reminded him that in a cinema on the 28th October of last year the renegade A. Prato whistled at and insulted the Duce's image and that, in spite of the testimony of ten spectators, Prato had not even been admonished.

Finally I told M. Ruegger that, should Switzerland not take immediate steps to liberate them, we would be obliged to take reprisals by expelling from our territory a corresponding number of Swiss journalists.

M. Ruegger assured me that he would raise the matter immediately with M. Motta with a view to obtaining their liberation, but made some reservations concerning the possibility of obtaining their immediate discharge from prison should the judicial authorities oppose the step. He asked me, however, to abstain as long as possible from any reprisal.

I then called the attention of the Swiss Minister to statements which appeared this morning in the *Journal des Nations* reserving the right to advance a formal protest as soon as I am acquainted with the exact text of the publication.

M. Ruegger entirely agreed with me as to the gravity of the matter and said that, for his part, he would be willing to support any request by us for action against the *Journal des Nations*.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE AUSTRIAN MINISTER.

Rome, 2nd July, 1936—XIV

I received the Austrian Minister,<sup>1</sup> who is leaving this evening for a short holiday in Styria. He mentioned the frequency with which he has been visited by the French Ambassador. The latter has in particular stressed to the Austrian Minister the danger to which, in his opinion, Czechoslovakia is exposed from a move by Germany. Chambrun urged the Austrian minister to exert pressure on us to

<sup>1</sup>Baron Egon Berger-Waldenegg, formerly Minister of Justice and Foreign Minister, and one of the leaders of Starhemberg's Heimatschutz; Minister to Rome from May, 1935 to March, 1938. Recalled by Seyss-Inquart's quisling Government after the German invasion of Austria, he refused to obey orders and remained in Italy. Proscribed by the Gestapo as the leader of a 'Free Austrian Movement,' he went underground when the Germans entered Italy.



## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

induce us to take action in favour of Czechoslovakia, similar to that undertaken in favour of Austria.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 4th July, 1936—XIV*

The French Ambassador called and informed me that he had received a telephone call from Delbos who wished to inform us that the resolution adopted at Geneva had been the result of a long effort by the French delegation to have a formula agreed to which would also be as acceptable as possible to Italy. He stressed that even if there should be certain points which might not be to our liking, yet, in substance, the resolution had been on the whole favourable to us since:

- (i) it decreed the abolition of sanctions,
- (ii) it made no mention of recognition and thus in practice left the states free to adopt any measure they liked.

I confined myself to thanking the Ambassador for his communication. He then added that, in M. Delbos's opinion, it might have been better had the Italian press not attacked the resolution for being less favourable to us, but had confined itself to noting its positive side.

I did not commit myself on this point, saying however that the academic gathering at Geneva left us absolutely indifferent, and that any verbal or theoretical product of the Assembly would have very little influence on the trend of our foreign policy in the future.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE RUMANIAN MINISTER.

*Rome, 4th July, 1936—XIV*

I saw the Rumanian Minister, M. Lugosianu, who called to express all his 'bitter feelings' at the violent press campaign conducted against M. Titulescu.<sup>1</sup> I replied that it was merited and added that, for our part, we had maintained an attitude of absolute restraint towards M. Titulescu for two years, and that as it had been he who had broken the truce with his outburst at Geneva, our reaction was more than justified. I therefore considered that the affair had ended in a draw.

<sup>1</sup>Nicola Titulescu, Rumanian Foreign Minister up to 30th August, 1936, had declared at Geneva on the 2nd November, 1935, in the name of the Little and Balkan Ententes, that peace between Italy and Abyssinia should be brought about only by means of the League, and had shown himself one of the most determined supporters of sanctions against Italy.

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

M. Lugosianu urged that further attacks should not occur. I repeated that the past was closed. But I showed him some press notices and telegrams which had reached me from Geneva in which it was stated that Titulescu had taken up an attitude hostile to us at the recent meetings of the Bureau. That might have caused fresh reactions by the Italian press.

M. Lugosianu again urged that complications in relations between the two countries must not be allowed to arise from a deplorable personal incident. I explained to him that the Italian people made a sharp distinction between Rumania, towards whom its feelings were unchanged, and M. Titulescu who, in order to insult us, had elected himself champion of the blacks.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE MEXICAN MINISTER.

*Rome, 4th July, 1936—XIV*

I received M. Ortiz, the Mexican Minister. I told him that the attitude of his country's delegation could not but have a sinister effect upon Italo-American relations, and that only as a result of positive steps by Mexico would we be able to continue to believe in their boasted friendship towards us.

The Mexican Minister was greatly put out by what I said and by the extremely cold tone I used towards him. He said that, for his part, he would do everything in his power to remove the unpleasant memory of his delegation's attitude at Geneva.

*Four days after the revocation of sanctions, on 8th June, London announced the withdrawal of the Home Fleet from the Mediterranean. On the same day Léger informed the Italian Ambassador to Paris that the French Government had informed London that with the abolition of sanctions the Mediterranean mutual assistance agreements should also be considered to have lapsed. Thus, one after another, the obstacles to international collaboration referred to in the Italian note of 30th June, to the President of the League Assembly, disappeared.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 9th July, 1936—XIV*

I received the French Ambassador who asked me for precise information on the Vienna negotiations for a *modus vivendi* between Austria and Germany.

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

I gave him a vague and indefinite answer, saying that we too had heard that negotiations were in progress but that I could not say whether any positive conclusion had been reached.

M. Chambrun was preoccupied by rumours of the restoration of the monarchy in Austria. On this topic I felt that I could give him ample assurances, and even went on to say that the Government in Vienna was annoyed by the insistence with which the press of the Little Entente, and particularly of Rumania and Yugoslavia, discussed the matter. There is no question of a Habsburg restoration at present.

*Mediterranean Agreements.* The Ambassador asked me what I thought of the French attitude in this matter. I replied that the statements made by Léger to Cerruti had produced a good impression with us. I reserved the right, however, to check by suitable sounding of opinion in London, Belgrade, Athens and Ankara, whether the French point of view was shared by the others.

*Meeting at Brussels.*<sup>1</sup> He asked me if Italy had decided to accept the invitation to Brussels. I said that, although no decision had yet been taken, I still made—indeed increased—the reservations I had made during our last conversation on the possibility of our participating in a meeting of the Locarno Powers from which Germany was absent. I asked him whether meetings of this kind served the cause of peace, or whether they did not rather tend to widen divisions and splits.

M. Chambrun finally pressed, in a personal capacity, for the re-admission into the Kingdom of Italy of the *Petit Niçois*—a paper in which the Under-Secretary of State to the President, M. Tesson, is particularly interested. There is, properly speaking, no decree banning this paper, but the frontier authorities have been instructed to be obstructive. I told Chambrun that the paper had in difficult times taken up an attitude which was very displeasing to us, but that we would, nevertheless, as an experiment, remove restrictions on it.

When leaving, M. Chambrun, by way of conversation, mentioned to me how useful 'political probity' would be to Fascist Italy, in that it would assure a straightforward and reliable line of conduct. He was obviously referring to our position as guarantors for Locarno. I reacted with a certain liveliness, saying that, as far as political probity went, Fascist Italy required no lessons from anyone and that on the contrary we had been able to establish that in recent events the straightforwardness of our conduct had not always been paralleled by others.

Chambrun went home.

<sup>1</sup>The Belgian Prime Minister, van Zeeland, had invited to Brussels for 22nd July the representatives of the French, Italian and British Governments, for a re-examination of the situation caused by the military re-occupation of the Rhineland by the Reich.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 11th July, 1936—XIV

I received the French Ambassador, who drew my attention to the fact that Marshal Graziani<sup>1</sup> had summoned Bodard,<sup>2</sup> the French Minister, and had addressed him very sharply as 'an enemy of Italy'. In the matter of radio, too, Marshal Graziani had adopted a 'strong and firm' attitude towards the French representative, declaring that the latter used the radio to spread alarmist news.

M. Chambrun told me that he did not intend to make Graziani's action a question of State, but that he was forced, nevertheless, to call the serious attention of the Fascist Government to the attitude of its Viceroy.

I allowed M. Chambrun to read the note<sup>3</sup> sent by us to the Belgian Chargé d'affaires. He did not attach much importance to the paragraph on agreements already in existence in the Mediterranean, but dwelt instead on the question raised by us of the necessity of inviting Germany also.

He asked me two things:

(a) if we had agreed on a reply of this nature with the German Ambassador.

(b) if there existed any sort of agreement with Germany.

To both questions I was able to reply in the negative.

He finally asked me whether, if Germany were invited to the meeting of Locarno Powers and if all conditions for our participation were met, I would be disposed to have an exchange of views with him on a purely personal level before the meeting. I told him that, for my part, there was nothing against it.

On the subject of the Austro-German *modus vivendi*, of which he had vague information, I limited myself to telling him that we, on our side, had followed its development from the beginning.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE RUMANIAN MINISTER.

Rome, 11th July, 1936—XIV

The Rumanian Minister drew my attention to the following:

1. That Titulescu has received a letter from his colleagues in the Little Entente and in the Balkan Entente absolving him from

<sup>1</sup>Rodolfo Graziani, commander of the troops stationed in Italian Somaliland during the Abyssinian war, had been nominated Governor-General and Viceroy of the occupied territories on 11th June, 1936.

<sup>2</sup>Bodard, French diplomat, Minister to Addis Ababa.

<sup>3</sup>In the note, the Italian Government had refused the invitation to the Brussels Conference, giving as a reason the existence of the Mediterranean pacts and expressing the opinion that Germany ought to be invited to take part even in the preparatory stage of the forthcoming meeting of the Locarno powers. 'The absence of one of the states signatory to the Locarno Treaty,' the note concluded, 'would in fact complicate rather than resolve the present situation.'

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

responsibility for the Geneva incident in so far that—as they affirm—he did not address the famous offensive words to the Italians. I replied that these expressions had been attributed to him by the international press, and by the Geneva press in particular, and that Titulescu had not made any denial. A simple denial would have sufficed to suppress the incident at birth. But in fact no denial has been forthcoming.

2. He drew my attention to the total suspension of orders for Rumanian petrol and asked for the reason behind our decision. I told him that it was strictly connected with the fact that Italy must, of necessity, review her economic policy after eight months of blockade by sanctions; that undoubtedly the friction caused by M. Titulescu's attitude and expressions had not made us more favourably disposed towards active renewal of commercial relations with Rumania itself. However, I advised M. Lugosianu to wait, and to suggest to his Government a policy friendly to Italy, this being the only means likely to facilitate and produce full resumption of trade with our country.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 11th July, 1936—XIV*

The British Ambassador officially informed me of the withdrawal of the Fleet and of the reduction of the British Air Forces in the Mediterranean. He expressed the belief and hope that this gesture by Britain might produce a great improvement in Anglo-Italian relations.

*Mediterranean Agreements.* On this subject he said that there was perhaps a misunderstanding. The Mediterranean agreements, properly speaking, ceased to be in force with the end of sanctions. On the other hand, Britain considers that the unilateral declarations made to assist the smaller Powers (Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia) in the event of aggression by us are still in force. These declarations promising British aid involve no reciprocal undertaking; therefore, in Drummond's opinion, one cannot speak of Mediterranean agreements. I then pointed out to him that the origin both of agreements and of declarations was to be sought in the tension caused in the Mediterranean by the Abyssinian war. I added that to clear the air once and for all, these declarations, too, which by their very nature cast the suspicion of aggressive intentions on Italy, must be done away with.

Drummond made the objection that he did not think it would be easy to achieve this immediately, since the mood of the small Powers was one of lively concern regarding the possibility of an act

of aggression or revenge by Italy. He said that any declaration by us which relieved Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia of this fear, would certainly help to facilitate an understanding, and England would the more easily be able to cancel existing declarations. I replied that I intended to consider his suggestion and that for the moment I could give him no definite answer.

*Addis Ababa.* Drummond, too, complained of Graziani's attitude and bearing towards the English diplomatic representatives, and protested at the sending of carabinieri into the Legation premises to forbid the use of the wireless transmitter. He left me two notes on the subject which I passed to my department for examination and reply if necessary.

*Locarno.* I allowed Drummond to read the note sent to the Belgian Chargé d'affaires. As far as our original motive for refusing to participate is concerned—that is to say the existence of the Mediterranean agreements—the question had been discussed previously. On the subject of the omission of an invitation to Germany, however, Drummond pointed out that Germany cannot be placed in the same category as the other Locarno Powers since she has not fulfilled her undertakings under the Locarno Treaty.

*The prospect of an early settlement of the Abyssinian question had relieved the general tension and it was with a feeling of increased confidence that the principal European Chancelleries continued to exchange their views on the agreements that were to replace the Treaty of Locarno, the latter having lost all practical value with Hitler's unopposed march into the Rhineland. However, the relief was not of long duration. The sanctions against Italy had hardly come to an end (15th July) when, on the evening of 17th July, the first reports of 'events of the utmost gravity' came in from Spanish Morocco. The military rising against the Madrid Government had begun.*

*For some time, in fact since the General Elections of 16th February, 1936, the growing bitterness of the political struggle in Spain had been common knowledge. The Government and its supporters, the Popular Front, whose leadership was clearly moving more and more towards the extreme Left, had launched a violent campaign against the Opposition whom they accused of plotting against the Republic and of actively preparing a Fascist dictatorship; the opposition parties, on the other hand, had reacted with increasing vigour. The latter claimed that the Popular Front had not obtained legally more than just over two hundred seats in a Parliament of 473 members, that the Government represented therefore only a minority and that the Popular Front's parliamentary majority was the result of large-scale electoral fraud, of Government-sponsored mob terror and intimidation, of the arbitrary annulment of all election certificates in many Right-wing constituencies, and of the expulsion, the arrest, or even the assassination, of many*

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

*legally elected deputies of the Right. According to the opposition the real enemies of the Republic were not on the Right but on the Left; Spain was in imminent danger of falling under a Communist dictatorship, and therefore by fighting the Popular Front they, the Opposition, were merely doing their duty in defence of law and order and of the freedom and the fundamental rights of the Spanish people.*

*All this was no secret, but the actual outbreak of the Spanish civil war, following so soon after the Abyssinian crisis, nevertheless surprised and shocked European public opinion.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 22nd July, 1936—XIV*

I sent for the Spanish Ambassador<sup>1</sup> this morning.

I acquainted him with the text of the telegram received yesterday from H.M. Consul-General in Barcelona, and explained to him that the Italian Government had felt it necessary to take steps to despatch two warships for the protection and eventual embarkation of Italian nationals residing in that city.

I told him that H.M. Ambassador in Madrid<sup>2</sup> had been requested by cable dated yesterday evening to inform the Spanish Government officially of this decision. Should, however, still more disturbing news of the situation in Barcelona be received, it would not be possible to wait until all necessary formalities had been observed, and the vessels would enter the port to ensure timely protection for our colony in that city and thus to avoid more serious incidents.

The Ambassador replied that he noted all that I had said, thanked me and assured me that the Spanish Government would have no reason to consider our action other than friendly.

He agreed that the situation in Spain was serious and asked me to pass on to the Press a *communiqué* containing reliable news which had reached him yesterday from the Madrid Government. He also expressed the hope that newspapers and radio would maintain an objective attitude to the course of events.

*The Spanish events made the task of replacing the obsolete Treaty of Locarno by a new agreement between the Great Powers more urgent as well as more difficult than it had been before. On the diplomatic plane the Anglo-French attempts to bring Nazi*

<sup>1</sup>Aguirre de Carcer, who resigned on 30th July, and along with other officials of the Spanish Embassy in Rome relinquished the diplomatic representation of Republican Spain.

<sup>2</sup>Orazio Pedrazzi, who left Madrid shortly after to withdraw to the French border, abandoning contact with the Spanish Republican Government.

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

*Germany into a system of mutual assistance agreements had, up to the end of the summer, been fruitless. France and Great Britain stuck to the decision taken on 19th March; thereafter efforts to overcome the obstacles, whether on the German side (Hitler's plan of 30th March), or on the French side (the counter proposals made by Paris on 8th April), had proved to be fruitless. The project for a pre-Locarno meeting at Brussels, favoured by France, Great Britain and Belgium, in which Italy, too, was to have taken part, had failed because of the objections raised by Rome, which were based on the continued validity of the Mediterranean agreements and on the exclusion of Germany from the meeting. Faced with the Italian refusal, the three Powers decided to meet in London on 22nd July, to examine the situation together. After two lengthy sessions, they published a communiqué on 23rd July, in which they stated that they 'wished to take the necessary steps to organise a meeting between the five Locarno Powers.' In consequence the three Governments proposed to enter into communication with the Italian and German Governments.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR AND THE CHARGÉS D'AFFAIRES OF BRITAIN AND BELGIUM.

*Rome, 4th July, 1936—XIV*

received the French Ambassador and the British and Belgian Chargés d'affaires, who presented me with three identical notes.

When delivering the note, the French Ambassador, who also spoke in the name of the other two representatives, informed me that a similar communication had also been made to the Government of the Reich, to which an invitation to participate at a forthcoming Five Power Conference had also been addressed.

Ambassador Chambrun expressed the hope that the Italian Government would be willing to accept at once an invitation to work towards the peaceful reconstruction of Europe.

On receiving the notes, I limited myself to stating that I would inform the Duce on a suitable occasion, and said that, in principle, should the obstacles which we had indicated in our note to the Belgian Government be removed—that is, should the Mediterranean agreements be abolished and an invitation sent to Germany—Italy would have no difficulty in resuming that effective policy of collaboration and of reconstruction which it had always traditionally followed.

I said that I would shortly issue an official reply.



## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

### CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 25th July, 1936—XIV

I received the Ambassador, von Hassell, who informed me of the decision by the Government of the Reich to close the German Legation at Addis Ababa and replace it by a Consulate.

I noted this with pleasure and thanked him for this important communication.

The German Ambassador asked me for news of the conversations in progress for the abolition of the Mediterranean agreements. I informed him confidentially that, early next week, the British Foreign Minister was expected to declare invalid all agreements and declarations concerning the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> On the subject of the note presented by the Ambassadors of the 'three democracies', I told him, at his request, that once the obstacle of the naval agreements had been removed and Germany had been invited to the Conference, we would be disposed to take part in any meeting that might be held.

We desired, however, that the official meeting should be preceded by an exchange of views through diplomatic channels, particularly with Germany.

Von Hassell informed me that the note had been presented in Berlin yesterday evening. The Director-General, who is in charge of the Ministry in the absence of von Neurath, thanked the Ambassadors of Great Britain, France and Belgium, for the invitation extended to Germany and stated that Germany is willing to participate in the meeting on the following conditions:

- (i) that the five Locarno Powers should take part.
- (ii) that Germany should participate on terms of complete parity.
- (iii) that the Conference be preceded by an exchange of views through diplomatic channels.

Von Hassell added that he had been instructed to inform us that such an exchange must in the first instance take place with Italy.

Having thus once more established the complete parallelism between German and Italian policy we agreed to meet next week to exchange information on any steps to be taken or agreed upon.

Von Hassell spoke to me about the situation in Spain, and

<sup>1</sup>After the French statement of 9th July, both Greece and Turkey had stated on 17th and 19th July respectively that, as far as they were concerned, they considered the Mediterranean mutual assistance agreements to have lapsed. Great Britain, in turn, had let it be understood that she was disposed to follow suit in order to reach a complete European *détente*, which had been made more urgently necessary by the unforeseen complications resulting from the Spanish Civil War. It was not until 27th July that Eden announced to the Commons that he was 'happy to recognise and announce that, in the view of H.M. Government, there is no longer any need to maintain the assurances' given to friendly Governments during the most acute phase of the Abyssinian crisis.

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

expressed the concern of his Government at a possible victory of the Communists in the Iberian peninsula. He told me that the Reich Government learns from a reliable source that the French Popular Front is preparing to help the Spanish Popular Front by supplying arms on the Continent, and perhaps also by intervention of French troops in Morocco. I told von Hassell that we, too, were following the question with great interest and that we shared the concern of the Reich Government at seeing the Soviet establishing itself at the gates of the Mediterranean.

On this subject, too, we intend to keep each other informed, and I assured von Hassell that, until such time as two German ships arrive in Barcelona, I shall instruct our authorities, in case of need, to protect the German colony which, like our own, is the object of particular persecution by subversive Spanish elements.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 29th July, 1936—XIV*

The French Ambassador today asked me when we would send a reply to the invitation to the Locarno Conference. He did not conceal his concern at the delay, and stressed the fact that the conditions laid down by Italy for her participation having been met, there should no longer be cause for delay. I told him that the reply would be prepared quite shortly, and that for the moment I saw no difficulty on our side that would prevent acceptance of the invitation.

I had, however, to draw his attention to the gravity of the situation which is developing in Addis Ababa owing to the presence of foreign legations there. It is true that the country is completely calm and that only a few marauding formations maintain a state of guerrilla warfare, but it is equally true—and this we have on irrefutable grounds—that it would all come to an end if the foreign Ministers and the armed legation guards left Addis Ababa. The continued presence of foreign diplomatic representatives in the former capital of the Negus gives rise in the native mind to the illusion that a return to the past is not completely impossible. That, obviously, cannot be tolerated by us. For the time being there is no question of an official request, but I drew the French Ambassador's attention to the advisability of bearing in mind our desire to see this problem resolved as soon as possible. Germany had given a good example. The sooner the others followed it, the more we would appreciate the gesture.

The French Ambassador told me that he would faithfully transmit our conversation to his Government.

With regard to the supply of arms to Spain, he told me that the

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

French Government and French firms will not furnish war material. He had, however, to admit—in reply to questions—that some private firms are to furnish planes. I pointed out to him that technically the bomber and the transport-plane are very similar.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 30th July, 1936—XIV

The German Ambassador informed me that his Government intends to answer the invitation to the Locarno Conference today or tomorrow. He told me that the oral response will be favourable in principle, and gave a list of some specific reservations exclusively concerned with Germany's attitude to clauses which contradicted the invitation itself.

No objections on our side to these reservations.

He went on to say that, on the basis of point 10<sup>1</sup> in Hitler's plan, the negotiations ought to develop under the co-ordination of London. The Ambassador stressed that it was a question of pure formality, since he had received instructions from his Government to inform us that the course of the Conference would mean maintaining contact first and foremost with Italy.

I immediately objected that I saw no necessity for Germany to give England this honour; that the very spirit of the pact put Italy and England on an equal footing; that, finally, this 'advance', which had not been requested by London, was not likely to make a favourable impression.

The Ambassador told me that a gesture of this kind, which should be interpreted as a pure act of courtesy, was intended to attract England increasingly towards the group of anti-Communist countries at the moment when the Bolshevik menace was casting a deeper shadow over Europe.

I persistently repeated to von Hassell that I did not see either the necessity or the advisability of such a gesture. Von Hassell told me that he will communicate my point of view to his Government but will, however, request that, should the proposal have been made verbally, no mention of it be made in the *communiqué*. He will give further information on the date of the German reply and on the point of controversy mentioned above during the course of tomorrow morning.

<sup>1</sup>Point 10 of Hitler's plan, put forward on 30th March, immediately after the military re-occupation of the Rhineland, read as follows: 'Germany, Belgium, France and the two guarantor Powers agree to begin consultations immediately, or at the latest after the French elections, under the direction of the British Government, for the conclusion of a pact of non-aggression and security of 15 years' duration between France and Great Britain on the one side and Germany on the other.'

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

### CONVERSATION WITH THE RUMANIAN MINISTER.

Rome, 30th July, 1936—XIV

The Rumanian Minister protested at the publication of a statement by the *Giornale d'Italia* and copied by other newspapers, according to which Italy has cut purchases of petrol from Rumania because of M. Titulescu's well-known utterances. Lugosianu said that if this information corresponded to the truth it must be interpreted as an act of economic warfare, which would produce serious reactions in Rumania.

In agreement with Guarneri,<sup>1</sup> I told Lugosianu that the news had no official character, that purchases of petrol had been suspended because Italy's financial resources made it advisable not to take new supplies, and that, finally, it was a case of a general and provisional measure which must be seen against the whole process of the revision of our economic relations with foreign countries. Lugosianu asked for a *communiqué* to this effect.

I replied that there was no question of issuing a *communiqué* in view of the fact that no such step had been taken by the Italian authorities, and that it was merely a matter of a newspaper article. In principle, a Rumanian newspaper could report what I had stated to the Rumanian Minister as a news item of its own.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH CHARGÉ d'AFFAIRES.

Rome, 30th July, 1936—XIV

The British Chargé d'affaires<sup>2</sup> protested at Marshal Graziani's request to foreign legations to deposit their ciphers at the post office and urged that representatives in Addis Ababa should be granted the right to cable in cipher, a right universally accorded to diplomatic and consular representatives in all countries of the world.

As agreed with Lessona,<sup>3</sup> I replied to Ingram that instructions had been sent to Graziani to the effect that he should allow foreign representatives to cable in cipher to their own Governments, but only to their own Governments, using the Italian wireless station.

I took the opportunity to draw Ingram's attention to what I told the French Ambassador last night about the danger and

<sup>1</sup>Felice Guarneri, Under-Secretary of State for Finance, and then Minister until 1939.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Maurice Ingram, Counsellor in the British Embassy in Rome from 1935 to 1937.

<sup>3</sup>Alessandro Lessona, Under-Secretary for the Colonies from 1929 onwards and later Minister until November, 1937.

## SANCTIONS UNSANCTIONED

annoyance caused to us by the situation arising from the continued presence of legations and foreign guards in Addis Ababa.

Ingram noted the argument I advanced and told me he will cable to his Government immediately. He asked me, by way of explanation, whether a possible conversion of the British Legation into a consulate would be considered by us to be an act of *recognition*.

I replied that obviously we would welcome this solution, but that we would not put on it any interpretation other than that which the British Government itself might possibly wish to attach to it.

## II

### CIVIL WAR IN SPAIN

3rd August—17th August, 1936.

*At the end of July the civil war which had been tearing Spain apart for two weeks appeared to be stagnating, resolving into a series of small clashes between more or less equal forces. On both sides difficulties of supply were already becoming evident. Simultaneously ever more numerous and urgent approaches were beginning to be made both by the Madrid Government and the Nationalists, in order to obtain aid. In this phase of the civil war the Italian and German Press had shown singular reserve; but the aid of Rome and Berlin for Franco had not been long in arriving. The Madrid Government, for its part, urged in Paris that planes and munitions should be sent without delay; and many military planes had already left France for Spain. To the journalists who asked for confirmation of the news circulating about the aid which France was sending to Spain, the War Minister, Daladier, had replied: 'Go and ask the Prime Minister, who is the only one who knows.' That was enough to make the struggle between the Axis and the Western Powers, which had barely died down, flare up violently again, and once more threaten the peace. Being aware of this danger, France then took the initiative to limit the effects of the Spanish Civil War, and addressed an urgent appeal to the principal Governments interested urging 'the speedy adoption and rigorous observance with regard to Spain of the normal standards of non-intervention.' During the session of the French Chamber on 31st July, both Delbos and Blum made it clear that France regarded the Madrid Government as the only legal Spanish Government, and a friendly Government; but if we are supplying arms, they said, others are doing the same.<sup>1</sup>*

#### CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 3rd August, 1936—XIV

I received the French Ambassador, who transmitted to me the French Government's urgent appeal that a non-intervention agreement should be reached on the Spanish question—an agreement

<sup>1</sup>The first substantial shipments of war materials to reach the Madrid Government forces came from the Soviet Union.

## CIVIL WAR IN SPAIN

which should in the first instance be between France, Italy and Britain, and be open to all other countries. In practice it would be a question of undertaking not to furnish to either of the contending parties in Spain arms or material liable to nourish the civil war.

I confined myself to acknowledging the invitation addressed to me by the French Ambassador, and stated that, in the Duce's absence from the capital, it would be difficult to give an immediate reply.

In the matter of the two Italian planes which had come down in Morocco,<sup>1</sup> the French Ambassador told me that he intends to let me have in a personal *aide-mémoire* all the details which his Government has provided. He added that it is his wish to be able to reach an amicable solution of this question as soon as possible.

I, for my part, replied that the competent authorities were conducting an inquiry, but that I was able to deny that the Fascist Government was implicated in any way, even indirectly.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 5th August, 1936—XIV

The French Ambassador informed me that his Government has received the British Government's reply to the move to reach a preliminary agreement on non-intervention in Spanish affairs between the three major Mediterranean Powers. The British reply is favourable in principle. Britain believes that the agreement, as well as including the three Mediterranean Powers, should initially also be concluded with Germany and Portugal. Later, all such Powers as are interested should adhere to it. England is ready to make a declaration of complete non-intervention in Spanish affairs, provided that a similar declaration is made by the French and Italian Governments. Chambrun also informed me that, as a result of a *démarche* in Berlin, the Government of the Reich has declared itself ready to examine methods of arriving at general rules for non-intervention in Spain. Chambrun admitted that this is a vague reply.

Finally, Chambrun spoke on the question of the Italian aeroplanes brought down in French Morocco. He left me all the technical details, which I am passing to the Air Minister with whom

<sup>1</sup>On the morning of 29th July, a squadron of military seaplanes, painted white and without markings, were flying over the Moroccan coast near the Spanish zone, when two of them broke formation. One crashed on the beach, the other landed undamaged at the mouth of the Moulouja nearly two kilometres from the Spanish frontier. The survivors, who were a mixture of Italian military personnel and civilians, were arrested for having violated flying regulations that should have been observed in that area. The planes had taken off from the aerodrome at Elmas in Sardinia and were making for Franco's H.Q.

I am preparing a reply. I informed Chambrun at once that, although an inquiry was at present in progress, I could state that they were not planes serving with an Italian air force unit, but machines supplied by a private firm to private Spanish citizens and that, finally, the Government had absolutely no knowledge of the affair.

I thanked the French Ambassador for the funeral given to the dead airmen and raised the question of those at present kept prisoner and of the machine now being held at Moulouja. I told him that since it was a case of a landing obviously caused by *force majeure*, it was impossible to insist upon the contravention of the rules governing flight over French territory, and that I therefore expected that the French Government would settle the question as soon as possible by returning the plane to the flyers and by giving them liberty to depart.<sup>1</sup>

On 6th August, Ciano communicated verbally to the Ambassador, de Chambrun, the Italian answer, which was summed up in four points:

'(1) Italy adheres in principle to the thesis of non-intervention in the Civil War which is harrowing Spain; (2) Italy asks whether the solidarity which has found and still finds expression in public demonstrations, press campaigns, subscriptions of money, the enrolment of volunteers, etc., does not already constitute a flagrant and perilous form of intervention; (3) Italy wishes to know whether the non-intervention undertaking will be universal in character or not, and whether it will be binding only on Governments or also on private citizens; (4) Italy wishes to know if the Government making the proposal has also in view any method of control of the observance of non-intervention.'

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH CHARGÉ d'AFFAIRES.

Rome, 6th August, 1936—XIV

I received the British Chargé d'affaires who handed me the attached *aide-mémoire* relating to the French proposal for an agreement on non-intervention in Spanish affairs.

The British Government has informed the French Government that it is in favour of an agreement of the kind between all Powers which could furnish arms and munitions to Spain. The agreement should consist of an undertaking not to furnish Spain with arms and munitions and to prevent the supply of such materials from the countries concerned. Initially the agreement should be between France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and England. Later it might, as

<sup>1</sup> On the 11th August the crews were tried by the tribunal at Oudjda, which sentenced them to a month's imprisonment with the right of appeal and to a fine of 200 francs.



## CIVIL WAR IN SPAIN

the British Government hopes, also be signed by other Powers.

I replied to the British *Chargé d'affaires* in the terms of the statement made by me to the French Ambassador shortly before. That is to say, I made it clear to him that Italy adhered in principle to the idea of non-intervention, but that such non-intervention would be efficacious only if extended to all the States interested, and above all if it were not limited to the supply of arms, but extended to propaganda and all other methods of support. There was a form of intervention and of warfare more dangerous than that which appeared to be preoccupying the French Government—it was the struggle which was fought on the ideological and spiritual plane; this type of warfare and this type of intervention must be prevented at the same time as, and concurrently with, the supply of arms.

### AIDE-MÉMOIRE

As is doubtless known to the Italian Government, the French Government has addressed itself to the British, German and Portuguese Governments, as well as to the Italian Government, for the purpose of arriving at a co-operative effort to settle the question of the supply of arms to Spain.

In reply, the British Government has informed the French Government that it would regard favourably the rapid conclusion of an agreement between those Powers capable of furnishing arms and munitions to Spain to the effect that they will abstain from so doing, and will prevent the supply of arms and munitions from their respective territories on the basis of the principle of non-interference in Spanish affairs.

The British Government is, however, of the opinion that an agreement of this nature must, from the beginning, be simultaneously accepted by those Governments—such as the French, German, Italian, Portuguese and British Governments—which have permanent material interests in Spain or geographical proximity to it.

It is to be hoped that at a later date the other Powers interested will accede to the agreement.

In bringing the above to the knowledge of the Italian Government His Majesty's Embassy has received instructions to express the British Government's desire to support the step taken in this connection three days ago by the French Government.

*Rome, 6th August, 1936.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 7th August, 1936—XIV*

The French Ambassador this morning handed me the draft declaration which is intended to commit the signatory Powers to

maintain neutrality towards Spain.<sup>1</sup> He told me that from the beginning six countries were expected to adhere to the plan, namely:—France, Italy, Britain, Germany, Portugal and Russia.

With regard to the queries made by us in our reply, the Ambassador said that in practice points 3 and 4 were already answered in the draft declaration, and that the French Government was ready to examine any modifications or suggestions which might come from the Fascist Government.

With regard to point 2, however, the Ambassador said that the French Government is not unaware of the importance of the demonstrations of moral solidarity which are causing concern to the Fascist Government. It notes, however, that such demonstrations take place in favour of both parties, and that it seems difficult to consider them in a declaration which has, and must have, an essentially practical character.

I told the Ambassador that I maintained the utmost reserve towards his answer, which was not such as to reveal the precise attitude adopted to the question submitted by the Fascist Government to the French Government. The reply he had given me did not, in actual fact, meet our point—that is to say to take steps towards spiritual disarmament, which we considered just as necessary as the embargo on arms, if not more so. With these reservations, I said, I would inform the Duce of the above and give an answer as soon as possible.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 10th August, 1936—XIV*

I handed to the French Ambassador the draft declaration, and, in addition, the article dealing with the recruiting of volunteers and with financial subscriptions. I also told him that we, on our side, did not consider the exchange between Governments of information on the measures taken to prevent the exportation of arms to be sufficient control, but believed, on the contrary, that in conformity with our request, it would be necessary to make the guarantee more precise. We therefore awaited concrete proposals.

<sup>1</sup>Draft Declaration. (In French). 'The Governments of . . . deploring the tragic events of which Spain is the theatre, being resolved to abstain rigorously from any interference direct or indirect in the internal affairs of that country, and being animated by the wish to avoid any complication prejudicial to the maintenance of good relations between the peoples, make the following declaration:

- (i) the Governments named above forbid, as far as they are individually concerned, the export to Spain, to Spanish possessions or to the Spanish zone of Morocco, of all arms, munitions and war materials, as well as of all aircraft, assembled or not assembled, and of all warships.
- (ii) this embargo applies to those contracts at present being carried out.
- (iii) the Governments of . . . will keep each other informed of all measures taken by them to make effective the present declaration, which comes into force immediately.'

## CIVIL WAR IN SPAIN

Naturally, during the course of my conversation with Chambrun I did not fail to go over the list of documents which show that France has supplied, and is continuing to supply, arms and munitions to the Red Government in Madrid. Chambrun took note of my statement and, in his turn, asked if it was true that Italy was preparing to dispatch 20 flying-boats, at present concentrated at Orbetello, to General Franco. I immediately denied it. On the subject of the trial of the airmen held prisoner in French Morocco, I told Chambrun that sentence and condemnation would naturally have the most unfortunate repercussions in Italian aeronautical circles and on our public opinion. The Valle-Denain agreements<sup>1</sup> might themselves be seriously affected. The Ambassador took note of my statement and assured me that for his part he would do his utmost to prevent the trial from taking place; on the contrary, in conformity with my request, he will attempt to facilitate the release of the imprisoned pilots and of the aeroplanes at present detained. He was, however, still awaiting our reply on the familiar question of those planes which had landed on French colonial territory.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 14th August, 1936—XIV*

I received the French Ambassador who told me that his Government had instructed him to inform us of its agreement in principle to the proposal advanced by us to prevent subscriptions and the recruiting of volunteers for Spain. Their adhesion was, however, purely theoretical since, on the pretext that it would have taken too long to make the other Governments accept our formula, the French Government made the following proposals:

- (a) the adoption of the non-intervention declaration as proposed by France;
- (b) Italy would add unilaterally that it upheld its request for the prohibition of subscriptions and of the recruiting of volunteers;
- (c) the French Foreign Minister would inform our Ambassador that France agreed with him on the advisability of not sending either men or money to Spain.

I replied that this French proposal appeared absolutely unacceptable to us. By its means an attempt was being made to transform into a unilateral recommendation pure and simple what had been a formal request on our part—a recommendation, moreover, which, while it tied Italy's hands and perhaps to some extent France's, left other countries—such as the U.S.S.R.—completely

<sup>1</sup>They dealt with Franco-Italian collaboration in matters of aviation as provided for by the agreements of 7th January, 1935.

free, though these same countries were the prime movers in the matter of subscriptions, and of collective and popular action in favour of the Red Government in Madrid.

I informed the French Ambassador that I would communicate his statements to the Duce, but that I felt it my duty to express my complete reserve on the acceptability of the French proposal. I added that while we, by abandoning our insistence on limitation of Press and radio campaigns and on the prohibition of public meetings, had gone a long way towards meeting the French proposal, it appeared to me that the other side, on the other hand, had rigidly maintained its position and that nothing was being done to advance agreement with us.

At the end of the conversation I also spoke to him of the necessity of immediately releasing the Italian plane which had landed in Morocco.

The French Ambassador assured me that he would exert his influence in Paris.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 17th August, 1936—XIV*

The French Ambassador returned this evening to request our answer to the proposals made by him during his last visit on Friday. He left with me the texts of the letters exchanged between the French Foreign Minister and the British Ambassador on the subject of the non-intervention agreement.<sup>1</sup>

Chambrun repeated the usual appeals for a decision by us in favour of the French proposals, assuring me—as Ingram did—that our supplementary proposals will be dealt with in a second and comprehensive agreement. I told him that I would reserve a reply until I had received instructions from my chief.

In the meantime I drew his attention to some serious demonstrations by the French which were such as to compromise any platonic theory of 'non-intervention': the speech by the Minister of the Interior, the speech by M. Duclos, Vice-President of the Chamber, and the journey to Spain of M. Jouhaux, who had stated before leaving that he was going to Madrid 'to participate in the triumph of the workers over the Fascists.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The exchange had taken place in Paris on 15th August between Yvon Delbos and the British Ambassador, Sir George Clerk. The letters respectively gave and took notice of the declaration by the French Government on the embargo already in force on the direct or indirect export of arms and war materials to Spain.

<sup>2</sup>The French Minister of the Interior, Salengro, had on 16th August made a speech in Lille, of which town he was mayor, in which he had said: 'I realise my responsibility and am weighing my words: as a Frenchman first of all, and then as a member of the Government of the Republic, I hope that the legal government of a friendly nation may win beyond the Pyrenees.' Duclos had taken part on 13th August in a meeting

## CIVIL WAR IN SPAIN

The Ambassador was forced to agree that these were serious and dangerous demonstrations, but, in his opinion, they should increase appreciation of M. Blum's effort to uphold and plan a policy of non-intervention.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH CHARGÉ d'AFFAIRES.

Rome, 17th August, 1936—XIV

The British Chargé d'affaires today called to urge in the name of his Government Italian acceptance of the French proposals on non-intervention. He added that acceptance would represent the first stage in the agreement, since at a later date the Italian suggestions to prevent subscriptions of money and the enrolment of volunteers might be the subject of another and wider agreement.

He left an *aide-mémoire* summarising his arguments.

On his referring to current rumours concerning the possibility of an agreement between Italy and General Franco for the cession of certain Moroccan territory, I presented him with a complete denial.

Finally I said that I noted his appeal, and that I would reply to the French Government on receipt of the necessary instructions from the Duce.

*In the face of Anglo-French pressure, the unbending attitude of the Fascist Government at last gave way. On 21st August the Italian reply delivered to the French Ambassador followed in fact, both in form and substance, the French plan, and confined itself to 'retaining its observations on the enrolment of volunteers and public subscriptions.' It seemed to indicate the beginning of an understanding.*

in Paris where immediate intervention in favour of the Madrid Government had been advocated. Jouhaux, Secretary-General of the C.G.T., had said in a public meeting that 'those who defend absolute neutrality have adopted an anti-French position', and that 'there is no neutrality for a class-conscious worker.' On his return from a journey to Spain, he stated on 17th August that 'quick and effective aid' was necessary if one wished to save the democratic regime in Spain,

### III

## LINKS WITH BUDAPEST AND VIENNA

7th September—15th September, 1936.

*On 24th August Hitler signed a decree raising the length of service for all arms to two years. It gave a new impetus to the arms race which had begun in Europe after 16th March, 1935, when Germany had introduced compulsory military service in violation of the Treaty of Versailles. The repercussions were immediately evident and far-reaching. France found in it a motive for further rearmament (this was announced on 7th September); and once more Britain and France strove to reduce to a minimum and, if possible, eliminate friction with Italy by disposing of the Abyssinian question in a manner that would save face all round. At the beginning of September, the Secretary-General of the League, Avenol, went to Rome to spy out the land.*

### CONVERSATION WITH M. AVENOL.

Rome, 7th September, 1936—XIV

Today I received M. Avenol. Our first topic was Italy's return to Geneva.

I at once made it clear to him that before resuming our collaboration we were waiting until the point concerning the Ethiopian delegation had been cleared up.

M. Avenol said that, in his opinion, it was unlikely that a delegation from the Negus would appear at Geneva. The Negus left the last time in too distressed a state to try once again. However, even if a delegation should present itself, M. Avenol declares, on the strength of information furnished to him by the best jurists, that the delegation would be removed, since the validity of its powers was not recognised. In fact Avenol considers that it would be very dangerous for the League of Nations to turn itself into a '*rifugio della legittimità*.' There would be too many ousted Governments which might be tempted to cite the Ethiopian precedent in an attempt to be represented at Geneva by self-styled delegations. The League would obviously not gain thereby either in prestige or in power.

M. Avenol is further of the opinion that no national representative will rise to defend any Ethiopian delegation whose powers

are not valid. He says that at the present moment all the delegates are too preoccupied with more important and serious events, which are even now taking place and which threaten the peace of the world. All will be happy to consider the out-of-date Italo-Abyssinian question finally closed.

I told him that I took note of his statement. However, it did not appear advisable to me that our representatives should take part in the Council or in the first sitting of the Assembly, that is to say, at a time when the Ethiopian delegation might still make an appearance. We would have representatives at the second meeting of the Assembly should the Ethiopians not have appeared at the first meeting, or, if they had appeared, had been made to withdraw.

As far as concerns the reform of the League, M. Avenol told me that it is his impression that no country will be willing at the present moment to push for a decision in this matter. If the topic is broached it will be only formally and without any positive conclusion being reached.

He then raised the question of Pilotti, and told me that the League of Nations would consider his loss extremely grave, for he is considered one of the best of the League's officials (this made me all the more convinced of the necessity of removing him from these circles!). Avenol therefore in the first place asked us to reconsider the arrangement confirming Pilotti in his present post. Should that not be possible he asked as a personal favour that Pilotti be left at his disposal for a few more months, since, with the nomination of Rosenberg as Ambassador to Madrid and that of the other delegate as Ambassador to London, he had lost all his collaborators in the course of the last few days.

I made him clearly understand that it would not be possible to reconsider the decision taken over Pilotti, but that, in view of his personal request, I might be able to consent, once I had obtained the approval of my chief, to Pilotti's remaining until March.

Avenol again made some reservations when Rocco was mentioned, not because the latter did not appear to him acceptable, but because he obviously wished to affirm the principle that the choice and nomination of the delegate was definitely his concern, whereas we were limited to suggesting a name.

While confirming that we wished to see Rocco at Geneva, I acceded to his desire to re-examine the question together shortly.

At the end of the conversation Avenol pressed to be allowed to present his compliments to the Duce.

I told him that the Duce will be able to receive him, and that I will be available to accompany him in the course of the next few days.

Avenol is staying in Rome until Thursday.

*It was not only the Western Powers which were concerned at the continued deterioration in the European situation. Thus one*

## LINKS WITH BUDAPEST AND VIENNA

*of the consequences of the German decision to raise the period of service to two years was the reshuffle in the Bucharest Government which took place on 29th August. Nicola Titulescu was brusquely replaced by Victor Antonescu. For many long years Titulescu had been the exponent of a policy of strict observance of the League Covenant and of complete understanding with France; nor had he hesitated, at the opportune moment, to inaugurate a good neighbour policy with the U.S.S.R. Titulescu's spectacular fall was the pre-condition of rapprochement with Italy, and even more so with Germany.*

*On the other hand, the rapid increase in power of Hitler's Reich had already attracted the attention of the two Danubian capitals most sensitive to developments in Germany. Both Austria and Hungary were linked with Italy by the so-called Rome Protocols, which were signed for the first time on 23rd March, 1934, and renewed and amplified on 23rd March, 1936. The Italian divisions which had been despatched to the Brenner had dissuaded Hitler from pushing to its conclusion the coup de main which had cost the life of Chancellor Dollfuss. Italian support had allowed Hungary to overcome the exceedingly difficult situation created by another assassination—that of King Alexander of Yugoslavia and of the French Foreign Minister, Barthou. Then, too, Mussolini was the only European statesman who had pronounced the word revision in favour of a Hungary 'mutilated' by the Treaty of Trianon. Finally, Rome bought the Hungarian grain which—at that price—would not easily have found buyers elsewhere. In spite of all this, at the beginning of the Abyssinian crisis and after the German re-occupation of the Rhineland, the head of the Hungarian Government, General Gömbös, had envisaged Hungary in the role of a mediator or even arbiter between Rome and Berlin, playing Italy off against Germany or vice versa as occasion arose. With this aim, Horthy had gone to visit Hitler, Gömbös having previously torpedoed the scheme for a regional Danubian pact of mutual assistance, which would have been particularly displeasing to Berlin. The new turn in events led the colleagues of the General to seek confirmation of the closeness of relations with Italy, they did not, however, cease to parade the fact that there was an atmosphere of cordial understanding between Budapest and Berlin.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE HUNGARIAN MINISTER.

*Rome, 7th September, 1936—XIV*

The Minister, Villani,<sup>1</sup> called today on his return from Hungary. He discussed the following topics:

1. *The Regent's visit to Rome.* The Minister has been

<sup>1</sup>Baron Frederick Villani, Hungarian Minister in Rome from 1934 to 1941.



## LINKS WITH BUDAPEST AND VIENNA

instructed by his Government to inform the Duce that the Regent<sup>1</sup> accepts the invitation with pleasure, and that he is ready to come to Rome any time after October 15. He is awaiting information as to which date will be most acceptable to His Majesty and the Duce.

2. *My visit to Hungary.* In the name of his Government, M. Villani was anxious to inform me that a visit by me to Hungary would be particularly welcome. He insisted strongly that on that visit I should be accompanied by my wife, to whom the Hungarian Government wished to give a particular welcome. He wished to suggest that on the occasion of this visit—which could take place in November—the meeting of the three Foreign Ministers of Italy, Austria and Hungary should be held in Budapest, as was foreseen in the Rome Protocols.<sup>2</sup>

I replied that there was no obstacle on my side to the idea of my visiting Budapest, and that I would inform him of the date and other arrangements after receiving the necessary instructions from the Duce.

3. *Hitler-Horthy Meeting.* Villani at once informed me that the Hitler-Horthy conversation had been chiefly due to the Regent's personal desire to make the Fuehrer's acquaintance and have direct contact with him, since he is head of a nation for which the Hungarian people have a warm feeling of friendship. The visit was entirely unpolitical in character, and the Regent, who never personally handles political problems, was not accompanied by any Minister or by Foreign Office officials. During the conversation, however, the following points were touched upon:

(a) *Austro-German Agreement.* The Regent congratulated Hitler warmly on the conclusion of the agreement, which has produced a state of *détente* in Central Europe and in Hungary has removed a source of grave concern by allowing the re-establishment of cordial relations between Italy and Germany—countries equally dear to the Magyar people. Hitler concurred with Horthy and said it is his intention to make the ties which unite the German and Italian peoples ever closer and more binding.

(b) *Communism.* The Fuehrer and the Regent found themselves at one in recognising in Communism the greatest peril to Europe and to peace. The Fuehrer revealed to the Regent his intention of following an active anti-Communist policy. He said that in Spain it was working effectively, and that, in this connection,

<sup>1</sup>Nicolas Horthy de Nagybánya, elected Regent of Hungary from 1st March, 1920, to 15th October, 1944; former Admiral and C.-in-C. of the Austro-Hungarian fleet in the last year of the 1914/18 war.

<sup>2</sup>On 17th March, 1934, the Italian, Austrian and Hungarian Governments had signed three protocols in Rome. In the first they pledged themselves to consult on all problems of a general nature in a spirit of friendship; in the other two they undertook to develop their mutual economic relations by setting up a permanent commission of three experts. On 23rd March, 1936, again in Rome, three protocols were signed which consolidated the collaboration of the three countries in political, economic and cultural fields.

## LINKS WITH BUDAPEST AND VIENNA

he was happy to be able to provide further proof of the good relations between Italy and Germany, since the operation in Spain in support of General Franco had been carried out in common.

(c) *Czechoslovakia*. The Regent found in the Fuehrer a strong feeling of resentment against Czechoslovakia. He stated, however, that he (Hitler) was ready to conclude a pact of non-aggression with the Czechs should they abandon their friendship with Russia.<sup>1</sup> Horthy came away with the impression that, as soon as she has finished arming, Germany proposes to show her enmity to Czechoslovakia by some concrete gesture.

4. *League of Nations*. Hungary has prepared a memorandum, of which Villani handed me a copy, relating to the revision of the Covenant. This memorandum will not be delivered immediately, but at a later date. In the meantime he would like us to inform him in writing of any observations or criticisms we might wish to make. The Hungarian delegation at Geneva will be led by Kánya.<sup>2</sup> Although the final decision has not yet been taken, it seems certain that Kánya will raise the question of Hungarian rearmament. On this subject, too, he would like to have our opinion on the advisability or otherwise of raising the question at present. Germany has promised full diplomatic support. M. Villani told me that the Hungarian people places full reliance on the promises of aid more than once made by the Duce, should the Little Entente have occasion to mobilise.

5. *Yugoslavia*. The conversations between M. Stoyadinovitch<sup>3</sup> and the Hungarian Minister in Belgrade are being actively continued but with little result. In order to reach an agreement, Yugoslavia wishes Hungary to declare that she has no interest in the minorities under Serbian rule. This declaration Hungary will not be able to make, primarily because it might in turn be invoked by Rumania and Czechoslovakia. However, M. Villani believes that it will be possible gradually to reach a strengthening in relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia, even if only temporarily.

6. *Rumania*. The Hungarian Government has watched Titulescu's removal with pleasure, but is now concerned at the growing influence of the Iron Guards,<sup>4</sup> which, should they come to

<sup>1</sup>On 16th March there had been signed in Prague by the Czech Foreign Minister Benes, and the Russian Minister Plenipotentiary, Alexandrovsky, a treaty of mutual assistance of five years' duration.

<sup>2</sup>Kálmán de Kánya, Hungarian diplomat, from 1933 to 1st December, 1938, Foreign Minister in the cabinets of Gömbös, Darányi and Imrédy.

<sup>3</sup>Milan Stoyadinovitch, head of the Yugoslav Government and Foreign Minister from 24th June, 1935 to 4th February, 1939.

<sup>4</sup>A Rumanian movement of an authoritarian and anti-semitic character founded in 1927 by Codreanu, but which spread only from 1933 onwards. Forbidden in 1931, 1933 and 1935, declared to be dissolved in 1938, and re-formed each time, it never, in fact, ceased its secret activity. After the assassination of Codreanu on 30th November, 1938, under their new leader Horia Sima, and during the pro-German dictatorship of Antonescu, the Iron Guards were able to function openly.

## LINKS WITH BUDAPEST AND VIENNA

power, would be prepared to follow a very severe policy towards the Hungarian minorities. In this connection M. Villani requested intervention in favour of these nationalities by our representative should occasion arise.

I replied that recently our relations with Rumania had been rather strained. M. Antonescu's gesture had obviously brought about a formal improvement, but so far there was nothing concrete. However, should our intervention appear useful and opportune, it will certainly be forthcoming at the appropriate time in favour of Hungary.

*Even more obvious worries beset the Government in Vienna, which was anxiously following Germany's offensive tactics and the widening of the ideological and political gulf in Europe. The Austro-German agreements of 11th July had not yet given grounds for recriminations and protests—it was still too early for that. But Schuschnigg had no illusions, and he feared the effects of the increasingly obvious parallelism which was at the basis of the policy of Rome and Berlin. He therefore sought to secure for himself some foothold in the other camp, by delaying, for example, a decision regarding his attitude towards the Spanish conflict; he also followed with attention the journey to Warsaw of General Gamelin, which came to an end without official communiqués after five days of visits and conversations, and the journey of Marshal Smigly-Rydz to France immediately after. (During these weeks Paris was exerting an effort to re-activate the languishing Franco-Polish alliance.) On that occasion Daladier toasted Poland 'our friend and ally in the task of safeguarding peace.' On 5th September there was signed at Rambouillet a Franco-Polish protocol, which re-affirmed the alliance between the two countries, defined the terms of collaboration of their military staffs, and settled France's financial contribution towards the defensive organisation of Poland. On 7th September, after the departure of Smigly-Rydz, the French Council of Ministers published a communiqué which added to what was already known that these meetings had served to create a détente in relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland, which had up to then always been precarious because of questions of territory (Teschen) and of minorities. Poland, they said, had come to recognise the uselessness of fortifying her frontiers with Czechoslovakia. Warsaw was less explicit, and stressed the economic agreements arranged by these meetings; but it issued no démenti. Shortly before, Schuschnigg had already informed the Fascist Government, through his minister in Rome, that along the German-Czech frontier and within German territory important troop movements, as well as the construction of barracks, roads and military works, were being observed. It was meant as an indirect warning, but was without any influence on the increasing rapprochement between Italy and Germany. However, in Schuschnigg's eyes Italy still seemed the*

## LINKS WITH BUDAPEST AND VIENNA

*only pillar with which to support effectively Austria's independence. So Guido Schmidt, Austrian Foreign Secretary, made an appointment with Ciano for a meeting in Rome.*

## CONVERSATION WITH HERR SCHMIDT.

*Rome, 15th September, 1936—XIV*

In the course of my conversation yesterday with the Austrian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs<sup>1</sup> the following topics were discussed:

*Spain.* The Secretary of State expressed to me his concern at the conditions in which Austrian subjects resident in Spain find themselves and will find themselves in the future. Some time ago steps had been taken for the establishment of an Austrian legation in Madrid. Now, before going further in the matter, the Austrian Government wished to learn our attitude.

I told Schmidt that in the present state of affairs I thought it extremely inadvisable to set up diplomatic representation with a Government which, in all probability, will shortly be finally deposed. If, as everything leads one to suppose, Franco achieves victory, we will when necessary be able to place before the new Nationalist Government, with which for obvious reasons the most cordial relations will be established, our support for the wishes and interests of Austrian citizens.

*Poland.* Herr Schmidt wished to obtain some particulars or other information on the result obtained by General Smigly-Rydz<sup>2</sup> from his recent visit to Paris.

I allowed him to read the report of the conversation held at Venice between the General and Under-Secretary of State, Bastianini.<sup>3</sup>

Herr Schmidt, while admitting that some improvement in rela-

<sup>1</sup>Guido Schmidt, Austrian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from July, 1936 to February, 1938, then Foreign Minister until the *Anschluss*. Widely regarded as Hitler's *homme de confiance* in the Austrian Cabinet, and as chiefly responsible for the Austro-German Agreement of 11th July, 1936, with its unhappy consequences, and for undermining Schuschnigg's resistance to German pressure, he was arraigned before an Austrian People's Court in 1946 on a charge of high treason; after a trial lasting many weeks he was however acquitted for lack of evidence.

<sup>2</sup>Smigly-Rydz, General, later Marshal of Poland, recognised as Pilsudski's successor on the latter's death (12th May, 1935). On 15th July, 1936, a decree bestowed on him the title of 'first person in the State after the President of the Republic.' From 30th August to 6th September Smigly-Rydz had returned the visit of General Gamelin, Chief of the French General Staff, who had visited Warsaw between 12th and 17th August. In Paris, in addition to an exchange of views of a military nature, there was signed an economic and financial agreement which aimed at giving new life to the Franco-Polish alliance.

<sup>3</sup>On 7th September, Marshal Smigly-Rydz arrived in Venice where he met Bastianini, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. The next day he left for Vienna and Warsaw.

## LINKS WITH BUDAPEST AND VIENNA

tions between France and Poland had resulted from the visit, considers that there is no substantial change in Polish policy.

Having received confirmation from me that the relations existing between the Italian Government and the Government in Warsaw are markedly cordial, particularly as a result of the Polish gesture of unilateral abolition of sanctions, he stated that it was the Austrian Government's intention to develop the already friendly relations which exist between Warsaw and Vienna.

*Czechoslovakia.* I confirmed at his request that the commercial *modus vivendi* recently signed at Rome contains no clause particularly advantageous to the Czechoslovak Government, and that it is completely analogous to the other commercial agreements reached after 15th July with the other former sanctionist countries. No change has taken place, nor is any foreseen, in normal relations between Rome and Prague.

*U.S.S.R.* He asked me if the breaking off of the trade negotiations had also a political significance.

I told him that the trade negotiations had broken off because Russia asked us to deviate from a line of conduct which we adopt towards all other States and which aims at achieving parity in our balance of trade. The breaking off of negotiations has certainly had a weakening influence on political relations between the two countries—relations which have recently grown cooler, as the continual and violent Press campaigns prove, particularly as a result of the Spanish revolution and of the Moscow trials.<sup>1</sup>

*Yugoslavia.* Herr Schmidt told me that M. Stoyadinovitch had already several times informed Chancellor Schuschnigg<sup>2</sup> of his desire to meet him. Schuschnigg has not replied one way or the other because Austria wishes to model its relations with Yugoslavia on Italo-Serbian relations as they are now and will be in the future. There are no substantial grounds of disagreement between Yugoslavia and Austria except the Habsburg question on which the Government in Vienna intends, however, to take no action, and the attraction which the Austrian capital exercises on the Croat people. Nevertheless, since there are many indications that relations of particular cordiality are being established between Berlin and Belgrade, Schmidt wonders whether it would not be advisable to bring about an agreement—which in his opinion should not be difficult—so as to draw Belgrade more into the Italian sphere of influence.

<sup>1</sup>During the summer of 1936 Stalin had suddenly arrested on the charge of conspiracy and intelligence with foreign powers, the most prominent leaders of the Trotskyist group. A trial followed which ended with death-sentences on Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov, Ter-Vaganjan, Mrackovsky, Reingold, Evdokimov and Bakaev, and with the deportation of many others.

<sup>2</sup>Kurt von Schuschnigg, Austrian Minister of Justice and of Education from 1932 to 1934 in the cabinets of Buresch and Dollfuss. After the assassination of Dollfuss, Chancellor of Austria from July, 1934 until the eve of the German invasion (13th March, 1938).

## LINKS WITH BUDAPEST AND VIENNA

I told Schmidt that we too had considered the problem from this aspect and that in the very near future, when our new diplomatic representative was in Belgrade, we would examine the possibilities most carefully and with due caution, and subsequently take a decision.

*Economic Relations between Italy and Austria.* In the name of Chancellor Schuschnigg, Herr Schmidt appealed strongly for economic relations between our two countries to be maintained in their present state. The support given by Italy to Austria in this field has been, and still is, of profound importance in maintaining her autonomy and independence from Germany.

I assured Herr Schmidt that economic relations between Austria and Italy will always be guided by political good sense and will bear the stamp of the friendship which binds the two countries.

*Revision of the Covenant.* I confirmed to Schmidt that we have not prepared any plans for revision; we are however opposed to any modification of the Covenant which aims at increasing the offensive power of the League of Nations.

I told him, however, in accordance with what Avenol has recently said, that I did not consider that the problem would be thoroughly discussed with the intention of reaching positive results at the next Assembly meeting.

*Meeting of Italian, Hungarian and Austrian Diplomats at Vienna.* I informed him that through the Minister Villani I had requested the agreement of the Hungarian Government to this meeting. In principle we agreed to fix it for a date in the first ten days of December. The agenda will be agreed upon through our diplomatic representatives.

## IV

### SHAPING THE AXIS

23rd September—6th November, 1936.

*On 9th March, 1933, the Fascist Grand Council, hailing the decisive electoral victory won by Hitler four days earlier, declared in an order of the day that it saw 'in the Fascist trend which is developing beyond the frontiers of Italy, a new spirit asserting itself, one which directly or indirectly, draws its substance from that solid system of doctrines and institutions by means of which Italy has created the modern state.' It is possible to recall other similar demonstrations from that period and later, always on the Italian side; manœuvres of Fascist diplomacy, too, which aimed at supporting or assisting or exploiting corresponding manœuvres in Hitler's diplomacy. The Axis, however, was not the fruit of Italian initiative. Nor did its roots go so far back. From 1934 to 1936 Italo-German relations were entirely dominated by the question of Austrian independence, and when they were not strained never succeeded in being anything more than correct. The Axis was essentially the product of the European crisis brought on by the Abyssinian conflict.*

*For a considerable period of the war in East Africa the attitude of Germany was very cautious. Hitler re-occupied the Rhineland, taking advantage of the differences between Italy, Great Britain and France, who were signatories of the Versailles Treaty and guarantors of the Locarno undertakings. The Abyssinian campaign had, from the military point of view, not yet produced very favourable results, thus confirming the attitude of the German General Staff which had an undisguised contempt for Italy as a military factor. And at that time Hitler attached much weight to the opinion of his General Staff. When, in the spring, military operations speeded up, the German attitude changed, became warmer; then feelers were put out and flattery was applied with the aim of reaching a closer understanding between the two totalitarian regimes. Mussolini, being sure of himself, and free to choose, consented; the agreement between Germany and Austria of 11th July, removed the first and most obvious difficulty in relations between Rome and Berlin. Then there came the war in Spain to offer a further basis for common action and understanding. The principal plank in their common policy—apart from the similarities of their internal regimes—was anti-Communism against which Fascism and Nazism had*

## SHAPING THE AXIS

joined to make a common front. Along with this went dislike of the League of Nations after the League's rejection of German claims in the matter of armaments and its threat to Fascist Italy with the weapon of sanctions. To this was added a common belief in the inevitable and imminent decline of the great democracies.

During the first half of September, Nazi propaganda had particularly stressed the anti-Communist theme. At the National-Socialist Congress in Nuremberg on 13th September, Hitler had said that Nazism and Bolshevism were 'two worlds which can only diverge, but never approach each other.' This served as an ideological justification of aid to Franco, especially after Giral's Government had been replaced on 4th September by a Government presided over by the secretary of the U.G.T. (Union General Trabajadora), Largo Caballero,<sup>1</sup> with del Vayo in the Foreign Ministry—a government completely dominated by elements of the extreme Left. But it also had the effect of isolating Fascist Italy even more from the Western Powers and forcing it to march with Hitler Germany. It is true that Pius XI, the very day after Hitler's Nuremberg speech, had in his turn warned the world against the perils of Communism, which, he said, must spread from Spain to set fire and destroy all Europe; but the Pope had not failed to add that a similar peril came from anti-Communist states, like Germany, which fought against religion and the Catholic Church. There was still some way to go before reaching a formal definition of a programme common to Rome and Berlin, among other things because London, during the same period, was making an effort to restore normal relations with Italy. But Anglo-German competition for the friendship of Italy was not in reality a serious contest. London displayed amiability without strength or any coherent purpose, and this was sufficient to convince Mussolini and Ciano that there was nothing to be expected from that quarter, with the exception of concessions and recognitions of accomplished facts following on unilateral action.

## CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE DUCE AND HERR FRANK.

*Rome (Palazzo Venezia), 23rd September, 1936—XIV*

The Minister<sup>2</sup> began by offering the Fuehrer's greetings to the

<sup>1</sup>Speaking at a meeting in Zaragoza Largo Caballero had declared: 'When the hour of revenge is at hand we shall not leave one stone upon another of this Spain that we shall destroy, to rebuild our own.'

<sup>2</sup>Hans Frank, Minister of Justice from 13th April, 1933, then appointed Minister without Portfolio in December, 1934. After the occupation of Poland was nominated in September, 1939 Governor-General of Polish territory. Executed at Nuremberg in 1946.



## SHAPING THE AXIS

Duce and expressing thanks for the work done by the Italian consular authorities, by the steamship crews and by the authorities in Italy, in aid of the German refugees from Spain.

He then went on to express to the Duce the Fuehrer's desire to receive him in Germany at the earliest possible moment, not only in his capacity of head of the Government but also as founder and Duce of a party with affinities to National Socialism.

He also said that the Fuehrer wishes to be able to make personal contact with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and that he was therefore instructed to invite him to come to Germany.

Concerning Spain, Herr Frank gave an assurance that Germany is giving aid to the nationalist parties solely because of solidarity in the field of political ideas, but that it has neither interests nor aims in the Mediterranean. The Fuehrer is anxious that we should know that he regards the Mediterranean as a purely Italian sea. Italy has a right to positions of privilege and control in the Mediterranean. The interests of the Germans are turned towards the Baltic which is their Mediterranean.

One problem to which Herr Frank wishes to call the attention of the Duce is that of colonial claims, a problem which is based on the economic needs of the German people. The Fuehrer does not conceal the fact that on this point he will meet with open British hostility. The despatch of Ribbentrop<sup>1</sup> to London represents the final attempt to make Great Britain understand the needs and position of Germany. It is clear, however, that any approach to Germany on the British side must be followed by a British approach to Italy. However, the Fuehrer has few illusions about such a possibility.

Direct contacts between the Nazi hierarchy and the Fascist hierarchy are necessary over and above diplomatic channels. The actions of both countries, like that of both parties, are specially directed against Bolshevik propaganda and the Bolshevik peril.

In German Government circles the Austrian question is considered to have been settled by the Austro-German Agreement of 11th July, to which the German Government intends to adhere strictly. Proof of this is that Hitler refused to receive the representative of the Austrian Nazi party at Nuremberg.

With regard to Hungary, Frank declares that Germany's relations with Hungary are good, and that they should be taken as a new example of collaboration with Italy.

As far as Geneva is concerned it is the Fuehrer's intention to keep step with the Fascist Government, and Herr Frank adds that

<sup>1</sup>Joachim von Ribbentrop, appointed German Ambassador to London on 11th August, 1936, and from 4th February, 1939, Foreign Minister. Executed at Nuremberg.

Germany is ready to grant recognition of the Abyssinian Empire whenever it is considered advisable.

Herr Frank concluded by expressing his own belief and that of the Reich Government in the need for increasingly close collaboration between Germany and Italy.

The Duce answers that we in Italy are in no hurry to see the Abyssinian Empire recognised; that is a matter for the other Powers rather than for us.

He appreciates, however, the German Government's intentions, and points out that the proposed recognition if made on the occasion of a special event, such as for instance the visit of the Foreign Minister to Berlin, would assume particular importance.

As regards Geneva, Italy has for all practical purposes left it, and it may be that in a few hours it will also have left it legally—should the League of Nations, in the presence of the Italian delegation, give preference to the self-styled Abyssinian one.

Relations with Austria are and continue to be most friendly. The agreement of 11th July was based upon the suggestions which the Duce himself made to Schuschnigg on 5th June, advising him to support an understanding with Germany because Austria was, in the first place, a German country, and further, because it was too weak a country to pursue an anti-German policy.

He is happy to note how much relations between Austria and Germany have improved.

As far as France is concerned he states that, with the present internal political conditions in that country, it is not possible for us to develop any common policy with it.

France is sick and old. It thinks only of eating; it is a country in which the cuisine has become 'an art of the State.' Its demographic decadence is terrifying. In France the population figure falls by two thousand every week.

During the last few days the Radicals attempted a revolt, but the Communist forces are impotent. If Blum were to attempt to get rid of them, the Communist party would probably come out on the streets.

France is of no interest until such time as the internal crisis is over.

In Spain the two fronts have formed—on the one side the Germans and Italians, on the other the French, Belgians and Russians. The Duce agrees with Hitler that the formation of the two fronts is now an accomplished fact.

Italy has helped the Spaniards, and at the present moment numerous acts of help are being performed without conditions, though much Italian blood has been shed and the Balearics were saved only by Italian men and Italian material. For the present it is necessary to win. After the victory we will ask nothing of Spain which might modify the geographical situation in the Mediterranean,

but will only ask her to follow a policy which is not contrary to the interest of Italy.

Our actions in Spain are an effective proof of our participation in the anti-Bolshevik struggle.

As far as England is concerned, the Duce believes that Hitler was right to make the attempt with Ribbentrop. But it will not succeed. Ribbentrop will accomplish nothing. The alignments are already clear: France and Russia, and along with France, England. Hence London will never be able to have a common policy with Germany. There is between England and France an old pact whereby the two countries, the bosses of the League of Nations, have undertaken to pursue a common policy. Now and again they may clash, but they will never come to a rupture. It is a case of historical solidarity between two rich, conservative and democratic countries.

There is in the possession of the Duce a document<sup>1</sup> from which Ribbentrop, when he becomes familiar with it, will be able to form an idea of what the results of his mission are likely to be. England intends to live with Germany only in so far as it will give her time to achieve rearmament.

Our relations with London are very bad and cannot improve. Every British measure provokes a counter-measure by us. When the English sent the fleet to Alexandria, the Duce sent five divisions to the borders of Cyrenaica. Now that the English are preparing new naval bases, we are preparing opposing bases. Mastery of the air in the Mediterranean is, and will always be, Italy's.

If, however, England should wish to adopt a new policy towards us, we might even welcome it. But in the present state of affairs there is no indication which leads one to foresee such an eventuality. One must bear in mind, along with the other symptoms, the

<sup>1</sup>A reference to a dossier of 32 documents dating from 26th April, 1933 to 8th January, 1936 collected by Eden for limited circulation to the members of the British Cabinet and entitled 'The German Peril.' In his preface to the dossier Eden stated that he believed it would furnish a useful introduction or background for the study of the German problem. The outstanding characteristic of the reports was the clear proof they gave of the steady and undeviating development of German policy under Hitler's guidance along certain well-defined and pre-established lines.

Hitler's foreign policy could be described as combining the destruction of the order established by the peace, and the re-establishment of Germany as a dominant power in Europe. The means of putting that policy into action were of two kinds: (a) internally, by militarisation of the entire nation; (b) abroad, by economic and territorial expansion. The form and direction of this expansion were the sole factors still uncertain in Germany's plans for the future.

From the reports Mr. Eden drew two conclusions:

- (1) It was vital for Britain to speed up and complete her rearmament in order to be ready to face any eventuality.
- (2) Parallel with her rearmament it would be well for Britain to consider whether it was still possible for her to reach some *modus vivendi* with Hitler's Germany, a *modus vivendi* which, while being honourable and safe for Britain, would contribute towards lessening the growing tension in Europe caused by the growth of Germany's power and ambition.

A copy of this dossier was conveyed to Mussolini by the Ambassador to London, Dino Grandi, on September 3rd, 1936.

nature of the journey made by Edward VIII,<sup>1</sup> who, just as he avoided touching Italy, has with equal care avoided touching Germany.

As far as the colonies are concerned, the Duce considers that the Germans are right to raise the question and agitate about it. The Germans, like the Italians, are a people without living space. At the opportune moment, Italy undertakes to support them. It is already known what answer English democracy is preparing to give to the German request: those populations which for twenty years have enjoyed the benefits of the liberal English system must not be put under autocratic German rule. It is obvious that in the colonial field, on one pretext or another, Germany will always have England against her.

The Duce further advises the rejection of the conference on raw materials.<sup>2</sup> It would settle nothing. Raw materials in national or colonial territory are paid for with simple state currency, but if they are procured abroad they must be paid for in gold.

As far as the visit to Germany is concerned, the Duce said that it was his wish to undertake it. It must, however, be well prepared for, so as to produce concrete results. It will cause a great stir and must therefore in its results be historically important. That will follow from the meeting of the heads of two related movements and philosophies. The visit will also be prepared for from the point of view of official diplomacy; it must define and mark not only the solidarity of the regimes, but also the common policy of the two States, a policy which must be clearly outlined as it affects the East and the West, the South and the North.

Herr Frank addresses another question to the Duce; he wishes to know how Italy has succeeded in making its relations with the Church normal, while in Germany the question bristles with difficulties.

The Duce replies that the struggle against religion is useless, whether Catholic or Protestant (not against the Jews, because there it is a question of race), since religion is as intangible as mist. For the State, it is important to divide the task clearly with the Church: 'You priests, your concern is religion not politics, the soul not the body. The citizen belongs to the State; the Church looks after only that portion of him which is religious.'

After the Concordat there was in Italy a rather grave crisis, and the Pope came close to using excommunication; but the struggle ended with the triumph of the State. Education is in the hands of the State, the Church provides the chaplains, who confine themselves to saying Mass. They must not have anything to do with sport

<sup>1</sup>In the summer Edward VIII had undertaken a Mediterranean cruise which had touched at the Côte d'Azur and Dalmatia among other places, and had extended as far as the Bosphorus.

<sup>2</sup>The proposal had come from the British Government.

## SHAPING THE AXIS

or gymnastics, nor with recreational activities: theology is the ecclesiastical field. Since 1st September, 1931, Catholic Action in Italy has practically ceased to exist.

It is necessary, however, to be continually vigilant. The Catholic Church is like a rubber ball; pressure must be constantly exercised in order to maintain the results of pressure, otherwise the ball re-assumes its original shape.

Herr Frank finally speaks of his cultural projects and of the intention to found at Munich a Palace of Justice in which there will be an institute of Fascist legislation to which the best law students in Germany will be admitted. Our Minister Solmi<sup>1</sup> will be invited to the opening ceremony.

He finally asks the Head of the State what, in his opinion, should be the relations between State and Party.

The Duce replies that in Italy the problem was solved by making the Party an organ of the State, in fact a civil militia under the orders of the State.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH CHARGÉ d'AFFAIRES.

*Rome, 26th September, 1936—XIV*

Mr. Ingram, the British Chargé d'affaires called on me and after having expressed his pleasure at the calm attitude preserved by Italy during the recent deliberations at Geneva, spoke to me about the situation in the Mediterranean.

He stressed, in the name of Vansittart, that all the recent British activities in the Mediterranean such as the King's voyage, the voyage of Sir Samuel Hoare,<sup>2</sup> the voyage of the Minister Stanhope,<sup>3</sup> the despatch of troops to Palestine, the visit of the Turkish fleet to Malta, were not and are not at all in the nature of an anti-Italian policy. They must, on the contrary, be regarded as normal manifestations of British activity.

According to him the bad interpretation placed on these events is due to the Italian journalists in London, and particularly to the correspondent of the *Tribuna*. These journalists wish to make people believe in an attempt at encirclement aimed at Italy which is not being considered nor has been considered by England.

<sup>1</sup>Arrigo Solmi, Professor of Law, Senator, from January, 1935 Minister of Justice and member of the Fascist Council.

<sup>2</sup>Sir Samuel Hoare, now Viscount Templewood, Secretary of State for India from 1931 to 1935, then Foreign Minister in Baldwin's Government from 7th June to 18th December, 1935. Nominated First Lord of the Admiralty in June, 1936, he was later Home Secretary in Chamberlain's Cabinet from May, 1937 to 4th September, 1939; thereafter Ambassador in Madrid.

<sup>3</sup>Lord Stanhope, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs from 1934 to December, 1935, then First Commissioner of Works; from 1937 to 1938 President of the Board of Education. On 27th October, 1938 became First Lord of the Admiralty.

## SHAPING THE AXIS

I confined myself to listening to what Ingram said, contradicting him only when he made a vague reference to possible relations between the Fascist Government and the heads of the Arab movement in Palestine, a reference which he withdrew immediately I reacted. With regard to the Press, I answered that it was not only our correspondents who had put this interpretation on the events under discussion, but almost the entire world Press.

Mr. Ingram was anxious to underline that England, for her part, is neither considering nor desires an anti-Italian policy.

But de Kérillis<sup>1</sup> whom I received a few minutes later and who has come from England, also informed me that anti-Italian sentiments are deeply rooted in the whole English nation, which nourishes an 'unbending hatred' towards Italy.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 3rd October, 1936—XIV*

I had the following conversation with the Ambassador, von Hassell.

*My Journey to Germany.* The Ambassador, von Hassell, officially invited me to travel to Germany between the 18th and 22nd of this month.

He was aware of Attolico's<sup>2</sup> instructions on the drawing-up of a *communiqué* at the close of my visit in which the following topics were to be touched upon: Locarno, the League of Nations, colonies, Communism, recognition of the Empire. He stated, in the name of his Government, that he agreed in principle, but reserved the right to approve the details later and to edit the text.

*Locarno.* On the question of Locarno, von Hassell informed me that the German Government intends, first and foremost, to approach the problem in full accord with Italy.

The Germans propose to reply to the British memorandum<sup>3</sup> but not before the Assembly has risen. I made the remark that it would be advisable to postpone the reply until after my visit to Berlin. Von Hassell took note of this and said he would communicate with his Government in due course.

The Reich Government states that in principle its attitude towards the completion of a Western Pact is positive. As far as relations with the Soviets are concerned, the German attitude continues to be negative, although it is not considered advisable, for

<sup>1</sup>Henri de Kérillis, noted French journalist and writer belonging to the nationalist movement.

<sup>2</sup>Bernardo Attolico, Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. from September, 1930 to July, 1935. From 26th July, 1935 Ambassador to Berlin.

<sup>3</sup>In conformity with the decisions taken at the meeting of the Locarno Powers on 1st April, 1936, the British Government had addressed to the German Government on 6th May a request for enlightenment on some points of the German memorandum of 31st March. No answer was ever given to the British questionnaire.

## SHAPING THE AXIS

the present, to make any gesture which might reveal that attitude. It will suffice to state that initially only the Western agreement is being considered, any Russian participation being excluded.

Germany's test of the terms of the Pact remains that of total renunciation of war between Germany, France and Belgium. Should France, however, propose exceptions, the Government of the Reich would reserve the right to consider them point by point.

No grounds must be given for overlapping between the new Locarno Pact and the League of Nations Covenant.

These are the general principles. The Ambassador added that in the forthcoming reply to the British note—a reply which will be of a preliminary nature—the Government of the Reich proposes to say only that Germany remains faithful to the idea of guaranteeing peace in the West by means of a Pact in the spirit of the old Locarno. But von Hassell himself wonders if a note of this kind would be considered a real and true answer to the English memorandum, or whether, instead, it would be looked upon as a delaying move.

I told von Hassell that it was necessary to examine the whole problem together and at greater length, and that the text of the German reply itself should be directly influenced by the text of the *communiqué* to be agreed upon as a result of my visit to Berlin.

*Spain.* The Ambassador told me that the German Government does not for the present intend to reply to Franco's telegram,<sup>1</sup> since a reply would have the force of recognition. It was intended to do so only after the occupation of Madrid, in suitable agreement with us.

*Conversation with the Duce.* Von Hassell finally told me that he had some matters to bring before the Duce on the Fuehrer's personal instructions. He therefore requests that a conversation be arranged for him, after which he will resume the conversations with me on the preparations for the journey to Berlin and the reply on Locarno.

If the Duce authorises it, I propose to accompany von Hassell to the Palazzo Venezia on Monday afternoon.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 7th October, 1936—XIV*

The British Ambassador, who has recently returned from two months' leave at home, called on me today.

He told me, first of all, that he had been impressed during his leave by the excellent conditions in his country, where he has noted an exceptional recovery in activity and of business. Rearmament is

<sup>1</sup>On the occasion of his nomination as Head of the State and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces on 30th September, Franco sent a telegram of greetings to Mussolini and Hitler.

proceeding actively and rapidly, and, as far as the Navy and Air Force are concerned, no difficulties are being met either in materials or in manpower. There are difficulties, however, with recruitment for the land forces, where there are shortages; but the British Government is determined to overcome all possible obstacles in this field, too.

Before leaving, Drummond had a long conversation with Eden, who personally instructed him to inform us that the interpretation placed on some aspects of British political life is false. It is the British intention to resume good relations with Italy as soon as possible, and to consider the Abyssinian question closed.

I pointed out to the British Ambassador that the interpretation of the Press was not only Italian in origin, but that of practically all foreign papers. I documented this statement for Drummond with some articles from the foreign press. I stated that I noted what he said, but that it would obviously have been better had the English press, in order to counteract the effect of what had been printed, made known publicly what Drummond had told me through diplomatic channels. I received no real reply.

Drummond then spoke to me of British concern at the policy we are pursuing in Egypt and Palestine, stressing in particular our anti-British propaganda in Egypt. He told me that his Government has proof of this, but I had the impression from the conversation and from the fact that Drummond's statements were very vague, that there are no such 'proofs'. However, I denied any intervention by us in the Arab movements in Egypt and Asia Minor.

Finally Drummond and I discussed the Locarno Memorandum. Having stated beforehand that the question was still under consideration and that I was therefore not in a position to inform him of our final attitude on the subject, I stated and explained to him the reasons why we are opposed to a formula which aims at transforming the Locarno Pact into a combination of tripartite regional pacts.

*Ciano left for Berlin slightly behind the schedule originally transmitted by the Ambassador, von Hassell, and arrived in the capital of the Reich on the evening of 20th October. He was received with an organised but not excessive display of enthusiasm by the crowd. A protocol had already been prepared by the Chancelleries of both countries; the meeting between Ciano and Neurath was to serve only to give it the finishing touches and provide the opportunity for signature. It was understood that the protocol would remain secret. The decisions relating to Spain, among others, could not be made public without at once destroying the fiction of non-intervention with unforeseeable consequences. Moreover, the announcement of the signing of a protocol, in other words of a veritable and formal pact between Italy and Germany, would have 'given rise to too many unfounded hypotheses', and so have been*



## SHAPING THE AXIS

*unwelcome to Germany because of the effects on Anglo-German relations. These were conditioned not only by the bitter quarrel between Ribbentrop, who aspired to become Foreign Minister by exploiting a diplomatic success gained in London, and Neurath, who was anti-British to spite Ribbentrop, but also by Hitler's determination not to repeat the errors of the Kaiser's Reich. The Axis was therefore shaped on German initiative, but also, as far as Great Britain was concerned, with German reservations. Mussolini, who sensed this, had therefore armed Ciano with the documents which Grandi had procured for him from London shortly before—the collection of telegrams and of reports of the British Embassy in Berlin which illustrated step by step the development of the Nazi Policy of expansion and of domination, and gave frank comment on its possible consequences. Mussolini instructed Ciano to hand these documents to Hitler personally, and this was not the least of the reasons why, after the conversations with Neurath in Berlin, Ciano went to Berchtesgaden to visit the Fuehrer.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER, VON NEURATH.

*Berlin, 21st October, 1936—XIV*

Together with the Minister, von Neurath,<sup>1</sup> we re-examined the various items of the Protocol and in turn expressed our points of view on the various questions.

*Locarno.* Neurath and I confirmed that we would keep in touch in the future as in the past, having once more discovered our identity of views on the question. Germany—according to von Neurath's statements—is not disposed to accept tripartite pacts, nor to countenance a situation arising in which the old Locarno Pact is revived plus a tripartite air pact between Britain, France and Germany. Further, the German Government does not intend that there should be any connection between the new Locarno, the situation in the East and the Covenant of the League of Nations.

We agree that the recent Belgian attitude is useless for our purposes;<sup>2</sup> Germany, too, will inform Brussels that this is her opinion.

The discussion on the possibility of a Western Pact brought the German Minister and myself to examine the relations of our two countries with England. I told Neurath that we were not pursuing

<sup>1</sup>Baron von Neurath, Ambassador to Rome from 1922 to 1930, then Ambassador to London, and in 1932 Foreign Minister. He retained the post even after Hitler's coming to power until 4th February, 1938.

<sup>2</sup>On 14th October, King Leopold had made a speech before the Council of Ministers in which, referring explicitly to the threat constituted by German re-armament, he announced Belgium's determination to pursue a policy which would be 'exclusively and completely Belgian' and based on a new regime of armed neutrality. This policy was restated in a Belgian note sent to the Foreign Office on 23rd October.

nor did we intend to pursue an anti-British policy, but we had to take notice of English activities directed at us. If England continues this policy we are determined to face up to her, and the necessary preparations are already in hand. Neurath said he entirely agrees with us in thinking that England is attempting to pursue a policy of encirclement against Italy. But England's policy, with regard to Germany, too, is far from being clear or friendly. Neurath has never had illusions on this score; he knows that England regards Nazi Germany with hostility.

I then thought it advisable to tell him that there are in our possession certain documents (which, by order of the Duce I shall send direct to the Fuehrer) which definitely prove Britain's intentions towards Germany. Neurath said that he is very pleased that these documents are to come into the Fuehrer's possession; for the Fuehrer will then be able to discard with more peace of mind those remnants of the illusions which Ribbentrop inspired in him, according to which England wished to follow a policy of friendship and sincere collaboration with Germany. But even the Fuehrer has lately been able to see how fallacious Ribbentrop's forecasts were.

*League of Nations.* Both Neurath and I fully confirm the contents of the agreement in the Protocol on this subject. I tell von Neurath that our decision to remain in the League is far from final; in due course, and when certain military police measures in Abyssinia are concluded, we will re-examine our attitude to Geneva. Neurath noted this, but for his part does not insist on our immediate withdrawal, since, while we remain members of the League of Nations, we can if necessary carry out a programme of sabotage which would aid our common ends.

*Communism.* The contents of the Protocol are confirmed.

*Spain.* Neurath informs me of the German Government's intention of proceeding to recognise the Franco Government immediately after the occupation of Madrid. I agree.

I ask von Neurath what information he has on the military situation of the revolutionary forces. He has no precise information but believes that they are passing through a critical phase of inactivity. I tell him that this is also our opinion, and that the Duce has instructed me, in this connection, to tell the Fuehrer that he intends to make a decisive military effort to bring about the collapse of the Madrid Government. He wishes to know if the Fuehrer is ready to associate himself with this operation. On our side, over and above the new air forces which we will send, we can also furnish two submarines capable of clearing the sea of the Red forces.

Neurath says that the Fuehrer will certainly agree; however, the question will be finally dealt with during the Berchtesgaden conversation.

The following points are fixed between Neurath and myself on the subject of Spain:

## SHAPING THE AXIS

- (i) an immediate joint military effort
- (ii) recognition after the occupation of Madrid
- (iii) joint action, to be defined in due course, to prevent the setting up and consolidation of a Catalan State.

*Austria.* We confirm the contents of the Protocol.

Neurath expresses his satisfaction at recent events which have led to complete consolidation of Schuschnigg's position. I fully concur with what he says.

I ask him what the German Government's intentions are concerning the elevation of their diplomatic representation to the status of Embassy. Neurath answers that he is against it, that he has given von Papen<sup>1</sup> instructions to that effect, but fears that the latter may have succeeded in obtaining from the Fuehrer—who does not attach much importance to this particular technical question—permission to put forward the proposal in Vienna.

I say that we, too, are against it. However, we agree that should it come to the elevation of the Legations to the status of Embassies, we would act in full accord and the measure would be taken on the same day.

*General Economic Policy.* I explain to von Neurath the reasons which have led us to devalue the currency.<sup>2</sup> Von Neurath states that he fully understands, and says that the Reich has not devalued its currency at present for special unforeseen circumstances, but that it is preparing to do so as soon as circumstances permit.

*Economic Collaboration in the Danube Basin.* We confirm the reference in the Protocol to the advisability of allowing the technical bodies to define—as soon as possible—the form and the limits of such collaboration.

The subject leads us to make a rapid examination of political relations with the various Balkan states. We dwell in particular on relations with Yugoslavia, and Neurath, noting the recent *détente* between Rome and Belgrade, tells me that it would be in our interests to establish good relations as soon as possible with Yugoslavia for two reasons: the first, which was of common interest, being concerned with the advisability of reinforcing the 'barrage' against Communism by Yugoslav adherence; the second of particular interest to Italy, being concerned with the advantage of attracting Belgrade away from British influence, in view of the fact that the Government of the Reich has reliable information that the English intend to build up friendship with Yugoslavia so as to

<sup>1</sup>Franz von Papen, Reich Chancellor in 1932. On 30th January, 1933, he became Vice-Chancellor and Commissar for Prussia in the new Hitler Government. From 1934 to 1938 he was Envoy Extraordinary in Austria. On 18th April, 1939, nominated Ambassador to Ankara, where he remained until 1944. Acquitted at the Nuremberg Trial.

<sup>2</sup>The Italian Government had, along with a number of measures, approved by the Council of Ministers during the session on 5th October, 1936, taken steps to devalue the lira.

secure the Dalmatian bases in the event of conflict and to complete the attempt at anti-Italian encirclement.

I reply that there is no serious cause of dissension between ourselves and Yugoslavia and we intend to reach an agreement.

With regard to Rumania, Neurath says that once agreement with Belgrade has been reached, she will inevitably draw closer to us.

Neurath says finally that the Albanians have repeatedly informed him of King Zog's<sup>1</sup> desire to set up a legation in Berlin. The German Government would like to have the Italian opinion on the subject. I reply that there is no objection in principle and that I shall take the liberty of informing him of any observations to be made on the subject.

*Abyssinia.* The Protocol is confirmed and I tell von Neurath that with regard to losses suffered by German citizens in Abyssinia he should furnish me with a list. I will see to it that the Viceroy on the spot will take steps to satisfy those who have suffered loss by *ex gratia* measures.

*Manchukuo.* Neurath says that the Fuehrer wishes to take the step of recognising Manchukuo<sup>2</sup> but that he intends to delay this gesture for some time so as not to compromise certain German economic interests in China. Relations of close collaboration have, however, been established between Germany and Japan, and in confidence he informs me that shortly they will proceed to the signature of two protocols—one public, containing an anti-Bolshevik agreement, and another secret, containing a clause guaranteeing benevolent neutrality in any eventuality.

By common agreement Neurath and I postpone the signature of the protocols until the next day; we intend furthermore to agree upon the statements to the Press and the information to be given to the diplomatic corps.

In principle we consider it inopportune to state that a protocol has been signed. That would give rise to too many unfounded hypotheses. It will, however, be necessary to say that the subject of our conversations have been recorded in an appropriate memorandum signed by both parties.

The conversation, which Neurath was anxious should be characterised by complete, I should almost say, exceptionally marked cordiality, lasted from 11.20 to 13.05.

<sup>1</sup>King Zog I, President of the Council in 1922, had been elected President of the Albanian Republic on 30th December, 1925. Proclaimed King of Albania on 1st September, 1928. He left the country on the Italian occupation in April, 1939.

<sup>2</sup>On 17th February, 1932, the territory known as Manchukuo, formerly belonging to China, and long contested by Russia, China and Japan, proclaimed itself an independent Republic with the aid of and at the wish of the Tokyo Government. The new State was recognised *de jure* only by Japan and Salvador on 15th September, 1932, and 21st May, 1934, respectively. In actual fact numerous other States maintained relations with Manchukuo through their consulates. On 30th April, 1936, Germany reached an agreement with it on trade questions.

## SHAPING THE AXIS

### CONVERSATION WITH THE FUEHRER.

*Berchtesgaden, 24th October, 1936—XIV*

The conversation took place in Hitler's private study on the second floor of his villa.

The Fuehrer expresses his pleasure at my visit to Germany and declares himself pleased with the results achieved through the collaboration of our two countries. I thank him and tell him that I am instructed to bring him a special greeting from the Duce who has always, even at difficult moments, nourished feelings of cordial sympathy for Hitler and displayed lively interest in his work.

The Fuehrer appears to be greatly touched by these statements coming to him from 'the leading statesman in the world, to whom none may even remotely compare himself'. During the imposition of sanctions England several times tried to lure Germany with promises, sometimes also with flattery, and to attract her into the sphere of anti-Italian activity. The Fuehrer never gave way to these flatteries because he has always had in mind Mussolini's immense services to his country and to the world, and because he was aware of Britain's intention of separating our two countries and then striking at them one at a time. An alliance headed by England against Italy would be the precursor of an alliance headed by England against Germany and vice-versa. The democracies have formed amongst themselves an automatic bloc which finds a sort of cement and yeast in Bolshevism. These forces are equally hostile to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

On the Fuehrer's asking me what is the present state of our relations with England, I give a rapid account of the situation, making it clear that it is part neither of our intentions nor of our programme to carry out an anti-British policy intentionally, but that it would be stupid and criminal for us to shut our eyes to the continual indications of anti-Italian preparations by the British Government.

Our manœuvre in reply to the attempt at encirclement is rapid and decisive. Should England aim at forming a ring round Italy in order to suffocate her, our reaction would be immediate and very violent. But, I added, Germany must have no illusions. British policy is directed equally actively against her. If there are no positive and direct indications of this, it is because England is trying to gain the time necessary to complete her rearmament.

At this point I present to the Fuehrer, as a special despatch from the Duce, the documents<sup>1</sup> mentioned before. The Fuehrer immediately reads Eden's circular and Phipps'<sup>2</sup> telegram, in which the

<sup>1</sup>See page 52.

<sup>2</sup>Sir Eric Phipps, British Ambassador in Berlin from 1933 to 1937, then in Paris from 1937 to 1939.

English Ambassador expresses the opinion that the Government of the Reich is composed of dangerous adventurers. The letter produces a profound impression on the Fuehrer, who reacts violently after a moment's silence.

'According to the English there are two countries in the world today which are led by adventurers: Germany and Italy. But England, too, was led by adventurers when she built the Empire. Today it is governed merely by incompetents.'

Reading the two documents has roused the Fuehrer. He proceeds to say that one must oppose to the understanding between the democracies another understanding led and guided by our two countries. But we must not confine ourselves to an attitude of passivity. We must take up an active role. We must go over to the attack. And the tactical field on which we must execute the manoeuvre is that of anti-Bolshevism. In fact many countries which are suspicious of Italo-German friendship for fear of Pan-Germanism or of Italian imperialism and would join the opposing camp, will be brought to group themselves with us if they see in Italo-German unity the barrier against the Bolshevik menace at home and abroad.

In Spain, Italians and Germans have together dug the first trench against Bolshevism. Germany has committed herself to the full in the Spanish question without any territorial or political aim: the Mediterranean is an Italian sea. Any future modifications of the Mediterranean balance of power must be in Italy's favour. Thus, since Germany must have liberty of action towards the East and the Baltic, by directing our respective energies in completely opposite directions, it will never be possible for there to be a clash of interests between Germany and Italy.

I point out to the Fuehrer that since 1919 Mussolini has kept high the anti-Bolshevik banner in the world, and that the policy applied internally has been such as to cause the complete disappearance of any Communist menace in Italy. Even the Spanish revolution, in spite of its having awakened much sympathy in the world, has not caused the slightest repercussions among the working classes and peasantry of Italy, who have definitely abandoned a Marxist and Communist ideology.

I state that our operations in Spain have also no territorial aims: we merely wished to bar the road to Bolshevism which was attempting to install itself at the entrance to the Mediterranean. We are now ready and determined to make a greater effort if only the Madrid Government can be overthrown. I tell the Fuehrer of the Duce's intention of sending another 50 aeroplanes and two submarines. The Fuehrer entirely approves, and says that he is willing to make any effort to ensure that the way is not left open to Moscow and assures me that he will give instructions to that effect to his military authorities. If it were necessary he would even be

willing to send some units. I tell him that at the time of the struggle for the Balearics we had already two battalions of Blackshirts in readiness.

The Fuehrer then propounds to me the line of action that should be followed. In his opinion there is no doubt that England will attack Italy or Germany, or both, if she feels that she can do so with impunity or with ease. These countries, which represent young forces whose aim is to obtain a better and more just distribution of wealth, are the natural enemies of England, the conservative Power, who finds it convenient to accuse them of wishing to disturb the peace of the world only because they represent a threat to her established interests and because she would like to see these rights consolidated by a crystallisation of the present world situation.

But—and this is the active side of the policy proposed by the Fuehrer—if England sees the gradual formation of a group of Powers which are willing to make common front with Germany and Italy under the banner of anti-Bolshevism, if England has the feeling that we have a common organised force in the East, the Far East and also in South America, not only will she refrain from fighting against us, but she will seek means of agreement and common ground with this new political system.

If then England were to continue to form offensive plans and merely sought to gain time to rearm, we would defeat her on her own ground, since German and Italian rearmament is proceeding much more rapidly than rearmament can in Great Britain, where it is not only a case of producing ships, guns and aeroplanes, but also of undertaking psychological rearmament, which is much longer and more difficult. In three years Germany will be ready, in four years more than ready; if five years are given, better still. But the military power achieved by our two countries will, even in the latter case, be such as to make England desist from any aggressive attempt.

Germany is already actively working to create this system of friendship throughout the world. We must look for something more solid and profound. The agreements made must arise from spiritual affinities and identity of interests. When these conditions have been brought about it is an easy matter, if necessary, to mark up on the map what already exists in fact.

Germany has already, in fact, made considerable progress with her agreement with Japan. Even with Poland very good work has been done. But the Fuehrer is somewhat sceptical of the real possibilities of Poland since that Government, far from being based like the German and Italian Governments on popular consent, maintains itself only 'with the bayonet'. A country with which Germany is on good terms and which it is hoped may soon arrive at a solid understanding with Italy is Yugoslavia. Rome must in the first place work on Budapest so as to advise the Magyars to

direct their irredentism against Czechoslovakia rather than against Yugoslavia. Germany has given similar advice. On the other hand, one must recognise that Hungarian claims on the Serbs are very modest, while those on the Czechs are of extreme importance. Yugoslavia is concerned at aggressive intentions which Italy might have against her. It will suffice to give her assurance on this score to win her over to our system, finally draw her away from the French influence and above all frustrate British intrigues to make Belgrade a centre of anti-Italian activity.

I assure the Fuehrer that our efforts are such as he has described, and that, in fact there has lately been a notable *détente* between Italy and Yugoslavia. And we are ready to go much further—to reach a real and true understanding.

Concluding the conversation, the Fuehrer repeated his pleasure at the agreement reached in Berlin and his desire to eliminate always in future any difficulty which may in practice arise between Italy and Germany. When the stake is so big we must remove obstacles of detail.

The Fuehrer then called von Neurath into the room and quickly summarised our conversation to him. Neurath who has always during the conversations with me shown a decidedly anti-British attitude—particularly so during the last few days—again turned the conversation to England. This gave the Fuehrer occasion to repeat that he had no illusions as to the intentions which Great Britain harboured against us and against him; he merely intends to be extremely prudent so as to gain time and attain such a state of military preparedness as to give him absolute assurance of success.

I once again spoke to the Fuehrer of the state of our military preparations, and noticed once again that he was deeply impressed by them. When we left the villa later, Neurath told me that the firmness with which I had expounded to the Fuehrer the Duce's intention to collaborate for peace, if it is possible, but at the same time to prepare us firmly for war, if it is necessary, had greatly struck the Fuehrer.

The conversation lasted two and a quarter hours. Hitler, who talked slowly and in a low voice, had violent outbursts when he spoke of Russia and Bolshevism. His way of expressing himself was slow and somewhat verbose. Each question was the subject of a long exposition and each concept was repeated by him several times in different words.

As I have said above, the principal topics of his conversation were Bolshevism and English encirclement. On this last point, however, he showed some uncertainty. Neurath says that it is the work of Ribbentrop, who every so often attempts to inject Anglophil optimism into the Fuehrer. But the Foreign Minister of the Reich is very sceptical of the results of the policy which Ribbentrop pro-



## SHAPING THE AXIS

poses to follow in London. Yesterday evening at table Neurath said the following (I quote): 'Ribbentrop will soon discover that in London it is easier to have compliments paid to one as a representative of a brand of champagne than as representative of the Government of the Reich.' At all events Neurath today seemed entirely won over to the Italian side, if for no other reason, then for personal ones. The duel between him and Ribbentrop is common knowledge, and in Germany everyone is waiting to see the outcome now that Neurath has succeeded in sending his opponent to work in a field which he himself described as the best for the development of German policy. Any success for Ribbentrop in London, which, by the way, is most improbable, would be failure for Neurath. The latter knows it and is ready to use any weapon to prevent it.

Of France the Fuehrer spoke—as do the other Germans—only superficially and with slight contempt. Some abuse of the Jews who govern her and nothing further. In their opinion France has ceased—at least for the moment—to be an active factor in foreign policy.

The Fuehrer showed himself particularly cordial towards me, repeatedly asked for information on the Duce's life and activities, and finally entertained to lunch the entire party to whom he was attentive and polite. During the break in the discussions he twice telephoned to Munich to receive a report on the reception arranged for me, for which he had personally given the most detailed instructions.

*Ciano's journey had put the finishing touches to the Axis, but it fell to Mussolini to baptise it. In his speech in the Piazza del Duomo, Milan, on 1st November, he used the following words: 'The Berlin meetings have resulted in an agreement between the two countries on certain specific problems, some of which in these days are burning ones. This agreement . . . this vertical line joining Rome and Berlin . . . an axis round which all those European States which are animated by a desire for collaboration and peace may work together.'*

*In this speech Mussolini did not speak only of Germany. A long passage towards the end was directly concerned with Great Britain. Mussolini observed that Italy is 'an island which juts into the Mediterranean' and if for Great Britain this sea is 'a road, one of the many roads, a short-cut rather whereby the British Empire reaches more rapidly its outlying territories', for Italy, on the contrary, 'it is life'. 'We do not intend', he went on, 'to threaten that road, we do not propose to interrupt it, but, on the other hand, we demand that our rights and vital interests should also be respected'. And he concluded that if a clash between the two Powers was to be avoided—a clash which would immediately take on European proportions, there was only one solution: 'Frank, rapid, complete*

*agreement on the basis of mutual recognition of interests'. It was at once an invitation and a threat to London, and an attempt to outdo Berlin in winning Britain's favours. Eden immediately disputed Mussolini's arguments, claiming that for Britain the Mediterranean was not a short-cut, but an important main road, and that freedom of communications in these waters was a vital interest for the British Commonwealth.*

*But he admitted that there was a sincere desire for collaboration with Italy, which the British Ambassador to Rome was instructed to prove by examples and documentary evidence without delay—this was the starting point for the first fruitless attempt to restore normal relations between Italy and Great Britain, which culminated in an exchange of statements on 31st December.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 6th November, 1936—XIV*

After the signature of the Trade Agreement with England,<sup>1</sup> Sir Eric Drummond requested to stay behind and talk with me.

He told me the following:

1. That the British Government wishes to withdraw the guard on the Legation at Addis Ababa as soon as we can guarantee to take all the measures necessary to protect the officials and property of the Legation.

I felt I could give Drummond such an assurance at once, adding that Addis Ababa was completely protected by the Italian police and troops.

Drummond said he would pass this on to his Government and that the matter could be made public.

2. He spoke of Eden's speech as a new gesture which England intends to make towards conciliation (a slip of the tongue which he at once corrected as 'towards an agreement').

In reply to some observations which I made on the text of the speech itself he answered that probably the translation by the Italian papers did not faithfully reflect the spirit which had animated Eden's speech, a spirit which he was authorised to state was one and the same as that which had animated Halifax's speech the day before.

He added that it would be most advisable for our Press to give a welcome—even of the most limited cordiality—to the Minister's words, so as to be able to make England's progress towards an

<sup>1</sup>On 6th November, after long weeks of negotiations, there were signed in Rome by Ciano and Drummond two Anglo-Italian trade agreements, one dealing with the procedure to be followed to balance payments between the two countries; the other, laying down the quotas on the basis of which United Kingdom imports were to be allowed into Italy. The agreements came into force on 16th November.

## SHAPING THE AXIS

understanding easier. Complete reserve, or worse still an attack, would cause new and unnecessary complications in the situation.

I told Drummond that I took note of his statements and that I was glad, moreover, that he had been instructed to add these explanations to what emerged from the speech as published.

3. Finally he told me that a Turkish naval mission is preparing to come to London solely to conclude an agreement similar to the naval treaty of 1936,<sup>1</sup> such as had been already concluded with Germany, Russia, etc. He had been instructed to stress the purely technical scope of the journey so as to avoid our putting on it an interpretation both erroneous and harmful to good relations between Great Britain and Italy.

I consider it my duty to add to the subject matter of the conversation given above that I found a decided alteration in Drummond's tone and attitude. For the first time he spoke, and that with urgency, of the need for the renewal of good relations between Italy and Great Britain, of the friendship between the two peoples, of the existence of reciprocal interests, etc.

<sup>1</sup>After the lapse of the treaties of Washington (1921) and of London (1930), naval armaments had been controlled by the Treaty of London of 25th March, 1936. This was binding only on Great Britain, the United States and France. The British Government which had already signed a naval treaty with Germany on 18th June, 1935, immediately entered into negotiations to extend the application of the 1936 treaty to Germany and the USSR. The negotiations ended on 17th July, 1937. Ciano therefore erred in believing that the Anglo-German and Anglo-Soviet treaties had already been concluded.

## V

### ITALY, AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY CONFER

9th November—28th December, 1936.

*As had been arranged, but with a delay of some weeks because of the death of General Gömbös which occurred on 6th October the first conference of the Foreign Ministers of Italy, Austria and Hungary met in Vienna. Ciano arrived in the Austrian capital on 8th November amidst an open display of coldness by the population, and devoted the first two days of his visit to conversations with Schuschnigg and Schmidt. The Austrian Chancellor expounded the fears which Nazi encroachments aroused in him—encroachments which, though hardly begun, were none the less threatening. He showed himself unwilling to leave the League and to come out on Franco's side. At the 3-Power conference Ciano met an old acquaintance, Kánya, who had retained the post of Foreign Minister in the new Hungarian Cabinet under Darányi. The main object of the conference was the adoption of a secret protocol which provided for benevolent neutrality, and was intended to strengthen the links between the three countries. There were no difficulties or surprises, but the latent unsatisfactoriness of the Austrian situation dominated the sessions. Then Ciano went on to Budapest on an official visit to the Hungarian Government.*

#### CONVERSATION WITH SCHUSCHNIGG, SCHMIDT, HORTHY, DARÁNYI, AND KÁNYA.

*Vienna-Budapest, 9-16th, November, 1936—XIV*

Both Chancellor Schuschnigg and the Secretary of State, Schmidt, immediately asked me for detailed information on my recent journey to Germany and were anxious to be reassured that the Berchtesgaden agreements have in no way modified our policy towards Austria. Having obtained this assurance and having expressed their satisfaction, they said that relations between Austria and Germany have not recently undergone any considerable change. There are, however, on the part of Germany, important and repeated attempts to infiltrate more and more into Austrian national life—particularly by Goering who has offered to hand over to Austria without payment as many as 600 aeroplanes and to accom-

## ITALY, AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY CONFER

moderate the Austrian Air Force officers in German camps, even having their pay issued by Germany. Naturally these offers have been refused, but Chancellor Schuschnigg has left himself open to accept certain supplies of arms.

Schuschnigg strongly urged—and perhaps this is why he greatly stressed Goering's offers—the resumption by us of military supplies.

I gave him assurances to this effect, all the more since he confirmed his desire to sign an agreement with us guaranteeing benevolent neutrality.

*League of Nations.* As far as the League of Nations is concerned, I found Schuschnigg very doubtful of the possibility of Austria's leaving the League. He realises that it is practically impossible for Austria to continue to take part in a society of nations which Italy has left, but wished to draw my attention to the advantages we could derive from retaining a faithful observer at Geneva in the person of the Austrian delegate. At all events we agreed that the question will be re-examined when Italy has taken a decision to abandon the League.

In our general review of the European situation nothing of particular importance emerged. With regard to Spain, too, the Chancellor expressed his grave concern over the situation, but when I told him of the Italo-German agreement to proceed to immediate recognition of the Franco Government after, and if necessary even before, the occupation of Madrid, Schuschnigg—although he did not say so openly—gave me to understand that Austria does not intend to take steps to recognise the Burgos Government so rapidly.

*Czechoslovakia.* Both Schuschnigg and Schmidt greatly stressed the need for Austria to maintain close economic and commercial relations with Czechoslovakia, but stated it was not their intention to come to any political agreement with that country.

*Yugoslavia.* Relations between Austria and Yugoslavia are normal, and recent months have produced no change in one direction or another.

*Armaments.* Austrian rearmament is proceeding rather slowly. I found a certain concern due to delays on our part in the despatch of arms. I gave an assurance that after the signature of the undertaking of reciprocal benevolent neutrality I would not fail to call the Duce's attention to Austrian requirements. On this subject I must add that when the agreement referred to above was signed both the Hungarian Foreign Minister and the Austrian Chancellor expressed the desire that a meeting of Chiefs of Staff should take place at an early date to examine the practical situations that might arise and to reach the necessary agreements.

I felt I could agree in principle to this request.

*Three Power Meeting.* During the three power meeting nothing of particular interest emerged. The Austrians repeated more or less what I have summarised above; I, on my side, have explained the

latest events and developments in Italian foreign policy. The acceptance and signing of the Protocol in the form and text proposed by us took place without encountering too many difficulties, except in the case of the undertaking to leave the League of Nations, on which many reserves were expressed, particularly by the Austrians.

I have the impression, which Kánya shares, that it is Schmidt who is chiefly responsible for putting spokes in the wheels; every day he shows himself to be more of a haggler, careerist and fop. He thinks—and has allowed it to be understood—that he will find scope for his ambitions on the Geneva platform. He dreams of a League success *à la* Titulescu or *à la* Bénès. I must admit that although on this occasion, too, I found in Chancellor Schuschnigg solid qualities of mind and character, Schmidt's influence is becoming preponderant and often obstructive.

### CONVERSATIONS IN BUDAPEST.

I do not consider it worth while to refer other than rapidly to the conversations which I had with the Regent. He is very little informed on international affairs, while on the other hand, according to what they say in Budapest, he continues to exercise a decisive influence on matters of internal policy. In short, he confined himself to expressing his pleasure at the conclusion of the Italo-German understanding and to re-affirming, on the basis of old recollections of a personal nature and of anecdotes from his career, his very high regard for the German people.

During the conversations with Darányi<sup>1</sup> and with Kánya I was first asked to inform the two Hungarian statesmen of the exact progress of the principal international questions at present under discussion. Thereafter Kánya told me about the situation in Hungary. In the first place he was anxious to explain why he had wanted to weaken the paragraph of the Protocols dealing with equal rights. He told me that he finds the present position useful, since it allows him to rearm as he sees fit without, on the other hand, depriving him of the useful weapon—particularly for internal political purposes—of throwing on to the Little Entente the blame for any difficulties Hungary may meet. Further he fears that an explicit decision on rearmament would create new and more difficult situations with regard to the Hungarian minorities.

As far as concerns relations between Hungary and neighbouring states, Kánya made the following statements to me:

*Yugoslavia:* Relations between Budapest and Belgrade are really improving and he considers that in the last analysis it is possible to reach an agreement, and even a cordial one, between the

<sup>1</sup>Koloman Darányi, was nominated Prime Minister on 1st October after the death of Gömbös. He retained the post until the end of May, 1938.

two countries. However, he believes that this is a road which must be followed with much calm and with the utmost caution. Stoyadinovitch is a man of great flexibility and of great ability, who has succeeded in the course of a relatively short time in creating an excellent international atmosphere for Yugoslavia. In fact Belgrade today lives on terms of friendship and good neighbourliness with the adjoining countries; there has been a *détente* with Budapest and Rome; there has been no slackening of the ties with France; there is close collaboration with Berlin, and there is no lack of polite offers from London aimed at making Yugoslavia join in the game England wishes to play in the Balkan and Mediterranean areas. Kánya is in favour of the policy initiated by us of *rapprochement* with Belgrade, but for this very reason advises us to proceed with extreme vigilance. It would undoubtedly be to the advantage of Hungary, too, if lasting and well defined relations between Belgrade and Rome were successfully established. But he considers, until it is proved to the contrary, that Stoyadinovitch—while willing to reach a marked *détente*—is not, on the other hand, anxious to give precise and formal undertakings in view of the fact that he intends to continue 'to have his fingers in a large number of pies.'

*Rumania*: Relations with Rumania are passing through a phase of relative calm. The Milan speech gave rise to certain suspicions, suspicions which died down, however, when it was realised that the Duce's statement did not involve any immediate, practical action.

Kánya realises the difficulties presented by revision with regard to Rumania and thinks that for the moment it would be advisable to reach a *modus vivendi* with Bucharest. He considers this very difficult in view of the bias and nervousness of certain Rumanian circles, but he does not despair of success.

*Czechoslovakia*: Relations are formally correct, but in actual fact they are extremely bad, and it is the intention of the Hungarian Government to give apparent proofs of good will while avoiding for the present any relations between Budapest and Prague. In substance the old policy continues. The drive of Magyar irredentism must be entirely directed towards Czechoslovakia which is the point of least resistance. On the other hand it is from there that threats continue to be directed against Hungary. There are Czech airfields—one day, perhaps, Russian ones—from which it is possible to reach Budapest in less than ten minutes' flight.

Kánya's information is that the Czech position is a matter for concern. German pressure is increasing daily. Goering, with his blunt sincerity, has said that in less than two or three years Czechoslovakia must cease to exist. It is evident that, in these circumstances, Hungary must continue to keep in the forefront of her policy her territorial claims on the Czechs. Since news had reached Kánya

of possible agreements and of negotiations in progress between Rome and Prague, I confirmed what I had already had occasion to inform him—namely that our relations with Czechoslovakia continue to be very vague and that no *rapprochement* is projected or even foreseen.

*Russia and Communism*: Kánya repeated that Communism at home is being fought with extremely energetic measures, and that Hungary is always willing, even in the international field, to take up a position openly alongside the anti-Communist states.

As far as Russia is concerned, it is evident that the Magyar Government cannot look on such a Power with sympathy. However, a Communist regime in Moscow, so long as it does not aim at spreading beyond its national frontiers its political and ideological influence, is preferable to a Czarist regime which might become the rallying point and at the same time the instigator of brutal and uncoercible Pan Slavism.

*Germany*: With Germany, relations continue to be extremely cordial, and the agreement between Rome and Berlin has had the effect of putting Hungary in a privileged position, much more pleasant than it was in the past.

Finally both Kánya and Darányi expressed their gratitude for what the Fascist Government has done on all occasions for the Hungarian people, and told me of the exceptionally favourable reaction which the Milan speech has produced in Hungary.

This I had opportunity to observe during my visit. The welcome which was provided by the Hungarian people, not only by those in Budapest who were organised in associations and in any case instructed by the Government, but also by the rural population and by the small groups of persons whom we met on the way in thinly populated and remote regions, proved how dear and popular the name of the Duce and of Italy is to the Hungarian nation.

This enthusiasm contrasted with the frigid attitude of the population of Vienna. On no occasion—and many presented themselves—did the citizens of Vienna make any gesture of friendship and sympathy towards Italy. In the streets dense groups of people gathered during the official ceremonies and watched correctly and calmly, but never a salute, never any applause, never a shout (with the exception of a few Roman salutes accompanied by a 'Heil,' which bore the pure Nazi hallmark). In the theatres, an equally cold reception and, particularly noteworthy, the Italian national anthems were never played at the opening or end of a performance; perhaps they were not even sure of the public's reaction. On the other hand I must say that Schuschnigg was, as usual, loyal, correct and cordial towards us. But I have the impression—and all those who were with me shared it—that his policy of friendship towards Italy is not at all popular.

Local diplomatic circles followed the progress of the Conference



## ITALY, AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY CONFER

and the stages of my Budapest visit with the most lively interest. In general I received a great deal of courtesy in those circles and particularly from the German representatives. Both von Papen in Vienna and Mackensen<sup>1</sup> in Budapest were present even at those receptions which were not limited to the Diplomatic Corps. They asked in a correct manner for information on the progress of the work, but did not display either disquietude or suspicious curiosity. Particularly worth mentioning, on the other hand, is the following: the British Ministers in Vienna and Budapest were the only ones who, on the repeated occasions which were offered, never had themselves presented to me. This did not go unnoticed and caused some comment. The French diplomatic representatives were very cordial.

*The report that follows, which is inserted at this point in order to maintain chronological order, has no apparent connection with those that precede or follow it. It is interesting for two reasons. Ciano's conversation with the Japanese Ambassador took place exactly one week before the announcement of the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact concluded between Germany and Japan in Berlin on 25th November. Secondly, it was Japan which took the initiative in order to produce closer relations between the two countries 'in the economic, cultural, political and military fields'.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 18th November, 1936—XIV

I received the Japanese Ambassador<sup>2</sup> who communicated the following to me:

1. The Japanese Government has come to the decision to transform the Legation at Addis Ababa into a Consulate and ask the Government of H.M. the King of Italy, Emperor of Abyssinia, to take equivalent steps.

This is considered equivalent to recognition of the Empire, for the Japanese Government makes no distinction of any importance between recognition *de facto* and recognition *de jure*.

The Ambassador, in the course of making his communication, asked for assurances for Japanese interests and trade in Abyssinia, which I did not fail to provide.

2. The Japanese Government informs us that the Hsing-King Government<sup>3</sup> has expressed its pleasure at the opening of a Consulate in Manchuria at Mukden. The Japanese Ambassador advises the following procedure: to instruct Auriti to send a note to the

<sup>1</sup>H. von Mackensen, formerly Minister to Budapest, Ambassador to Rome from March, 1938.

<sup>2</sup>Yotaro Sugimura, Ambassador to Rome from 1935 to April, 1937; then Ambassador to Paris until January, 1939 when he was recalled to Tokyo.

<sup>3</sup>Hsing-King, seat of the Manchukuo Government.

<sup>4</sup>Giacinto Auriti, Italian diplomat, Ambassador to Tokyo from 5th January, 1933.

Ambassador of Manchukuo in Tokyo asking for an exequatur for the new Consulate.

The Japanese Government draws attention to the advisability of keeping the two gestures distinct so that they may not appear to be a case of a *quid pro quo*. Therefore, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow—that is when confirmation has arrived from Tokyo as a result of my assurances to Sugimura—we will be able to give the Rome press the *communiqué* on the Japanese decision to recognise the Italian Empire. Two or three days later one could publish the news of the opening of the new Consulate in Mukden.

The Japanese Ambassador was also anxious to inform me that his Government wishes to achieve a consolidation of the good relations which have been established between Italy and his country, by tightening the bonds which unite the two nations in the economic, cultural, political, military fields, etc.

He told me that he has already prepared a plan to this effect, and that he intends to speak to me about it as soon as he has received some instructions on points of detail from his Government. I, on my side, encouraged him, saying that an agreement with Japan is both desired and hoped for by the Italian Government.

Before leaving the Ambassador was eager to express his own pleasure and that of his Government at our policy which aims at combating the Bolshevik peril in the world by means of the struggle being waged in Spain.

*Whilst, as the year drew to its close, the agreement in principle between Rome and London, which was intended to pave the way to a wider and more lasting understanding, matured, Fascist diplomacy was making more and more approaches to the Yugoslav Government led by Stoyadinovitch, in order to link it with the policy of Rome, thus removing it from French and British influence, not to mention the incipient ambitions of Germany. Indeed, many factors in relations between Italy and Yugoslavia had lately changed. The feeling that mutual hostility was inherent and irreconcilable, had given way to a better understanding of mutual interests. Belgrade, it is true, had adhered to the Mediterranean mutual assistance agreements during the period of sanctions, and had subscribed to sanctions. But its attitude was one of ostentatious correctness. With the end of the Abyssinian War and the lapse of the Mediterranean agreements, contacts between Rome and Belgrade became closer. Trade was the first beneficiary under this new orientation. Then came political developments. Commenting on the economic and financial agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia on 23rd September, Stoyadinovitch said that it allowed one 'to look forward with greater faith to the development of relations between Italy and Yugoslavia. We are entering upon a new period of collaboration.' In reply, Mussolini stated shortly after in the Piazza del Duomo in Milan that there now existed 'moral, political and economic relations*

## ITALY, AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY CONFERENCE

between Rome and Belgrade on a new basis of genuine friendship." In the capital of Yugoslavia, the first conversations between the Italian Minister and Stoyadinovitch began in November. In the middle of December the situation was ripe for the opening of proper negotiations, which both parties wished to keep strictly secret until their conclusion.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE YUGOSLAV MINISTER.

Rome, 18th December, 1936—XIV

I received the Yugoslav Minister<sup>1</sup> who allowed me to read a letter which has reached him from Stoyadinovitch. He begins by saying that he agrees with us as to the advisability of beginning *pourparlers* by the representatives of our Governments, without, for the time being, fixing the limits of the agreement. They must, on the contrary, be a product of the progress of the meetings. For his part, Stoyadinovitch is very optimistic about the results of these conversations and believes that the agreement may be far-reaching.

He went on to apologise for the delay and explained that it was due to the absence of Prince Paul from Belgrade; as soon as the Regent returned he was informed of the preliminary conversations which had taken place, as well as of the *modus procedendi* agreed upon. Regent Paul was entirely in agreement.

Stoyadinovitch ended his letter by instructing the Minister, Ducic, to inform me that he would very shortly nominate two official delegates, one for political questions and the other for economic questions, so that conversations can begin. He accepted Rome as the meeting place and recommended that the utmost reserve be still maintained.

M. Ducic asked me if we wished these representatives to arrive between Christmas and the New Year, or whether we considered it advisable for them to arrive at the beginning of January. I left the choice to him.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE YUGOSLAV MINISTER.

Rome, 28th December, 1936—XIV

The Yugoslav Minister called, bringing a message from M. Stoyadinovitch.

M. Stoyadinovitch is anxious to inform us that the delay in beginning official *pourparlers* with us is due solely to the necessity

<sup>1</sup> Milan Ducic, accredited to the Quirinal from 15th August, 1935, to September, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Prince Paul Karadjewitch of Yugoslavia, Prince Regent for King Peter II, and the recognition of the latter's father, from 19th October, 1934 to 27th March, 1941, when a military coup d'état conferred full powers on King Peter, then a minor.

## ITALY, AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY CONFER

for him to prepare the ground internally and to arrange the necessary material for the forthcoming conversations. He contradicts statements by certain papers to the effect that a *rapprochement* between Italy and Yugoslavia would be conditional on a previous Anglo-Italian agreement.

M. Stoyadinovitch has nominated as his delegates for the negotiations with Italy, M. Milivoy Pilya<sup>1</sup> and the Minister Plenipotentiary, Dr. Subotic.<sup>2</sup> They will arrive at Rome at the beginning of January.

<sup>1</sup>Milivoy Pilya, a high official of the Yugoslav Minister of Commerce.

<sup>2</sup>Subotic, a former Minister of Justice.



1937



## VI

### GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

6th January—23rd January, 1937.

*On 31st December, 1936, there took place an exchange of notes between Ciano and the British Ambassador, on the subject of the status quo in the Western Mediterranean. On 2nd January, Ciano and Sir Eric Drummond signed a common declaration—better known as the 'gentlemen's agreement'—in which it was recognised that Italy and Great Britain had equally vital interests in the freedom of the Mediterranean, and that there could be no question of any alteration in the status quo in that region. The event was an important one and not unexpected, although it to some extent anticipated general expectations. Great Britain was preoccupied with the turn affairs had taken in Spain with the influx of thousands of 'volunteers' to aid one or the other side, and worried over the possible repercussions of a change in the political and territorial structure of the Iberian peninsula through the victory of one of the contending forces. First of all, there was the question of sovereignty over the Balearic Islands, which are an extremely important strategic position for effective control of the Mediterranean. Mussolini had made them into the principal naval and air base for operations against the Spanish Republic; and there was a persistent rumour that Franco had ceded them or had pledged himself to cede them in return for the aid which the Duce had furnished to him in the now exhausting Civil War. There were those who went so far as to state that after the recognition of the Franco Government a secret agreement had been drawn up between Burgos and Rome. In fact there was a secret agreement, which had been signed on 28th November, 1936, but any cession of territory was excluded.*

*The terms of this agreement were :*

*'The Fascist Government and the Spanish Nationalist Government, united in solidarity in the common struggle against Communism, which at the present moment more than at any other menaces the peace and security of Europe, animated by the desire to develop and reinforce their own relations and to further with all their strength the social and political stabilisation of the European nations, have examined in detail the questions affecting the two states through the agency of their respective representatives in Rome and Burgos, and have agreed on the following points :*



## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

'1. *The Fascist Government will in future pledge to the Spanish Government its support and aid for the conservation of the independence and integrity of Spain, including both metropolitan territory and colonies, as well as for the re-establishment of social and political order within the country itself. Technical agencies of both parties will in future maintain contact to this end.*

'2. *Convinced that close collaboration between them will be useful for both countries and for the political and social order in Europe, the Fascist Government and the Spanish Nationalist Government will maintain close contacts with each other, and will concert their actions on all questions of common interest, particularly on those concerning the western part of the Mediterranean on which it may prove necessary to co-ordinate their respective actions, and will lend each other mutual support in the effective defence of their common interests.*

'3. *Each of the two Governments undertakes not to participate in any other grouping of Powers, or agreement between Powers, which might be directed against the other party, and will not contribute directly or indirectly to measures of a military, economic or financial nature, directed against one of the contracting parties. In particular, they undertake not to permit the exploitation of their territories, ports and inland seas, for any kind of operation directed against one of the contracting parties, or for the preparations for such operations or for the free passage of the materials or troops of a third Power. With this end in view, the two Governments undertake to consider all agreements previously concluded and incompatible with the present text to be invalid, and to suspend the implementation of all undertakings arising from the above mentioned agreements.*

'4. *The Fascist Government and the Spanish Nationalist Government have agreed on the subject of Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant, concurring in the opinion that the manner in which it has recently been interpreted and applied is full of grave dangers to peace, and that it must therefore be abolished or radically modified. In the event of one of the contracting parties finding itself involved in a conflict with one or more Powers, or if collective measures of a military, economic or financial character are applied against one of the parties, the other Government undertakes to adopt towards the first-mentioned Government an attitude of benevolent neutrality, to guarantee it the necessary supplies, to put at its disposition all facilities, the use of ports, of air-lines, of railways and roads, as well as the maintenance of indirect commercial relations.*

'5. *With this object in view, the two Governments believe it is of value to lay down, with effect from the conclusion of peace, the method to be adopted for the exploitation of their own economic resources, particularly raw materials, and of the means of com-*

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

munication. The technical agencies of both Governments will shortly conclude the agreements necessary to this end.

'6. The Fascist Government and the Spanish Nationalist Government consider it possible and in accordance with the interests of both parties to develop as much as possible all forms of economic relations and sea and air communications. With this object in view, and having regard to their particularly friendly relations, they concede each other all possible facilities for exchange of goods, for the mercantile marine and for civil aviation.'

Ciano, therefore, had not lied when he signed the declaration of 31st December and the ensuing 'gentlemen's agreement'. Great Britain could feel at ease on that score and the French Foreign Minister, Yvon Delbos, rejoiced publicly, with almost unseemly haste, over the conclusion of these agreements, but later, speaking before the Senate on 23rd February, he revealed the reason for that haste: 'The Anglo-Italian agreement,' he said, 'has produced a détente in the relations between Rome and London, but nothing more. Indeed, how could it be possible to think of solving the Mediterranean question in its complexity without the aid of France?' Three weeks later, on 19th January, Eden told the House of Commons that 'there is not a word, line or comma in the Anglo-Italian declaration which can give any foreign Power the right to intervene in Spain, whatever the nature of that Government, or in whatever part of that country.' But Eden's official optimism, too, probably outstripped itself. Exactly twenty-four hours before, Mussolini had given an interview to the *Völkischer Beobachter*, and presented with the question 'Could the proclamation of a Soviet Republic in Spain, or in a part of Spain—for example Catalonia—assume the significance of a threat to the status quo?' he had replied: 'Obviously.' Eden had gone on to say that if Britain's primary interest with regard to the Spanish war was the maintenance of the political independence and territorial integrity of Spain, the second was the strict limitation of the conflict to that country's territory. On this point the Anglo-Italian agreements had made no explicit provision, but the matter was covered by implication. Limiting the conflict clearly meant, among other things, preventing the flow of volunteers. On Christmas Eve, London and Paris had addressed a note to Rome, Berlin, Moscow and Lisbon, asking them to participate in common action to attain this end. On 8th January, Rome had still not replied, and all too soon the clear sky of the Anglo-Italian agreements was clouded over.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 6th January, 1937—XIV

The British Ambassador came to speak to me today and to leave me a note in which is expressed the concern of the British Govern-

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

ment over the question of the volunteers in Spain. He repeated verbally the contents of the note.

I replied :

1. That our reply on the question of volunteers<sup>1</sup>—a reply agreed on with Germany—is now almost ready and that I would in due course convey it to the British Ambassador, probably some time tomorrow. This reply, which once more contains an exact chronology of our attitude to the question of volunteers in Spain, is inspired by common sense and by the sincere Italian desire to avoid any greater complications.

2. That I must once again point out that we had been the first to urge the necessity of preventing volunteers from going to Spain. But now, as things are, and until such time as England is in a position to prevent all countries, in particular France, Belgium and Russia, from sending volunteers to the help of the Communist forces, we will allow our volunteers to enter Spain. We do not send them. We put no pressure on the volunteers. The national spirit of Italy is such that even without an appeal from the Government all Italian youth desires, as soon as it feels itself engaged in an anti-Communist struggle, to take part in the fight. We are again very willing to prevent the movement of volunteers to Spain if similar steps are taken by the other countries. Otherwise our volunteers will continue to leave and will be in a proportion of ten to one.

3. That the reference to 'ambiguity' contained in the last line of his *aide mémoire* could not be directed at us. Our line of conduct has always been correct and loyal. It will not be possible to accuse my statements today of ambiguity.

The British Ambassador noted what I said, recognised the logic of our policy and expressed his pleasure at our repeated attempts to render possible a peaceful settlement and to avoid greater and more serious complications.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 11th January, 1937—XIV*

This morning I received the British Ambassador, who communicated the following to me :

1. The British Government informed us that it was its wish to register the recent Mediterranean agreement with the League of Nations. It asked if the Italian Government intended to do likewise.

I replied that we, on our side, could not prevent the British

<sup>1</sup>The Italian and German Governments replied simultaneously on 8th January with two notes similar in content. The two Governments declared themselves 'willing to agree that the question of volunteers should, as requested, form the subject of a special agreement which would prohibit their recruitment and departure as from an early date'. The agreement must, however, be of a 'general character, that is be accepted by all Governments and further be subject to effective control.'

Government from taking what steps it thought fit; but we would not register the agreement at Geneva.

2. The Ambassador told me that in the former British Legation at Addis Ababa there were deposited five cases containing personal property of the Negus. Two of these contained gold to the value of five or six thousand pounds; the others, on the other hand, contain objects of no particular value. The British Government wished to ask the authorisation of the Italian Government to remove these belongings from Abyssinia in order to return them to their owner.

When making the request, Sir Eric Drummond stressed that the British officials could have sent off these goods without informing us, simply by using their diplomatic privilege. They had wished, however, to inform us as a mark of good faith, trusting to the Fascist Government's goodwill and understanding. The British Ambassador also recalled a conversation in which the Duce had promised to treat the Negus with generosity as a result of the way in which the latter had behaved towards the foreign press.

I replied to Sir Eric Drummond that it was not within my power to give a reply, that I would hold it over until a time in the near future, but that in principle I must immediately register the objection that the Negus's personal belongings left in Abyssinia were subject to confiscation by Italy and that, moreover, specific laws forbid the exportation of gold from Italian territory.

In principle I gave Sir Eric Drummond to understand that there were many difficulties in the way of giving an answer in the affirmative.

3. Sir Eric Drummond handed me the new British note on the subject of volunteers.<sup>1</sup>

While waiting a reply, he told me that he had been instructed by his Government to ask whether we would be willing to prohibit henceforward the departure of new contingents of volunteers, in view of the fact that the recent disembarkation at Cadiz had produced a deep impression.

I replied to Sir Eric Drummond that while I confirmed the intention of the Fascist Government to prevent any further departures as soon as the conditions referred to in our note had been met, I could not give any undertaking of the nature he had requested. That would have left the field open to other countries bordering on Spain which continue to allow innumerable Communist volunteers to enter the Red zone every day. I told him that we were informed recently that by the Perpignan railway alone 45,000 men had been carried.

<sup>1</sup>Following on the Soviet reply of 29th December, 1936, the Portuguese reply of 5th January, 1937, the Italian and German replies of 8th January, the British Government drew the attention of the Governments of Moscow, Lisbon, Rome, Berlin and Paris to the scheme for the organisation of a control system in the Spanish ports and on the land frontiers of Spain, which had been drawn up by the London Committee and submitted for examination to both parties in the conflict.

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

Sir Eric Drummond noted my reply and himself admitted that—according to his information—more than 500 persons crossed the Franco-Spanish frontier daily.

*Two days later, on the evening of the 13th, Goering arrived in Rome. In many quarters, international public opinion had considered the Anglo-Italian agreements, not without relief, as a weakening of the Rome-Berlin Axis. Goering's journey to Italy was therefore in the nature of a demonstration, or at least, that was one of its aims. During the five days of his stay, the Prussian Prime Minister was received by the King and by Mussolini; he met the most important personalities of the regime. On the 18th he went to Naples and visited the heir apparent, Umberto. On the same day he withdrew to Capri to rest until the 22nd. He found occasion, however, to make several statements. Among other things: 'The most important thing is to state how cordial is the relationship—or rather the friendship—between the two countries, and that it is becoming ever stronger. I believe that from this point of view my journey has been an effective contribution.' On the 23rd, Goering returned to Rome, had another meeting with Mussolini for a 'recapitulatory conversation'—as the official communiqué published that evening expressed it. The communiqué added that the conversation had lasted two hours.*

### CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE DUCE AND PRESIDENT GOERING, IN THE PRESENCE OF COUNT CIANO AND HERR SCHMIDT.

*Rome (Palazzo Venezia), 23rd January, 1937—XIV*

In answer to a question from the Duce on his impression of his Italian Journey, Ministerpresident Goering replied that he will take back to Germany a very deep impression of all that he has seen and heard; he had been particularly impressed by his visit to Guidonia.<sup>1</sup> He has observed that the Italian Air Force is inspired by a spirit of great optimism, which is perfectly natural and to be welcomed. But therein also lies a certain danger of overestimating the fighting power of the Air Force as compared with the Navy. In Germany, too, much attention is being given to the question of the relative power of the Air Force; he (Ministerpresident Goering) does not believe that an air force can destroy a naval fleet in a truly decisive manner. In this connection trials were made with 250 kilogramme bombs on the Spanish cruiser Jaime; although the ship received a direct hit, such as to cause even the magazines to explode, it was able—although with a heavy list—to make port and to be repaired

<sup>1</sup>Aerodrome near Rome called after the General of the Technical Service of the Air Force, Alessandro Guidoni, who died when experimenting with a new parachute on 27th April, 1928.

so as to be put back in service. From this experience it would appear that aeroplanes are not capable of destroying armoured vessels.

The Duce admitted that he, too, had some doubts on the employment of the Air Force against the Navy. In Italy, too, this subject is still under discussion.

Ministerpresident Goering then stressed the very great defensive power of ships in proportion to the surface area to be protected, in view of the fact that warships are provided with a large number of anti-aircraft guns. There is the further difficulty that ships are difficult to hit from high altitudes, while bombs dropped from too low an altitude have not the necessary penetrating power. It has moreover been found that torpedoes launched from aeroplanes very often pass under their target since—given their point of departure, which is higher than that of ships' torpedoes—they very often submerge instead of remaining immediately under the surface of the water. Nevertheless it must be remembered that an Air Force can tire and wear down naval forces by continually chasing them out of port. Aerial forces could not, however, destroy a naval fleet. The Fuehrer had officially asked Ministerpresident Goering if it would not be better to use the money necessary for the construction of a ship of 35,000 tons for the construction of aeroplanes. In spite of his office as Air Minister he had not, after considered reflection, been able to advise against the construction of the 35,000 ton ship. As the best solution he had merely proposed the construction of the ship and the allotment of the same sum for further development of the Air Force. It is necessary to keep naval armament in view at all costs, in consideration of the fact that England is building five battleships over and above her normal programme.

The Duce replied that very soon Italy will have four new ships, that is, two converted ships and two new ships of 35,000 tons, so that Italy will finish by having eight battleships in all. To these are added 24 ships of 8,000 tons of the *Condottiere* class, as well as 100 submarines.

Ministerpresident Goering then pointed out that Italy with eight battleships, Germany with another eight, and Japan with at least 12 more, would constitute a very considerable naval force compared with other countries.

In Germany, on the other hand, they are extraordinarily glad that Italy has been able to find a *modus vivendi* with England.

The Duce underlined the importance of a strong fleet since only that can assure for Italy freedom in her continental policy.

Ministerpresident Goering then added that, by its Abyssinian campaign, Italy had shown that it could carry out its policy even without England, a thing which in the past had always been considered impossible.

The Duce stated that Italy is maintaining as reserved an attitude as possible towards England, without failing to recognise

that Eden's last speech,<sup>1</sup> for instance, which was directed at both Italy and Germany, was particularly bad. The Duce is of the opinion that when the Fuehrer speaks shortly he should deliver a very strong speech ('eine sehr starke Rede'), since Germany has a strong army and Air Force and will soon be extremely strong at sea, too. In English speeches one continually sees coming up again the old plan of offering Germany economic advantages in return for concessions in the political field. This is a disgusting trick which England has also repeatedly tried out elsewhere.

In this connection Ministerpresident Goering expressed the conviction that in his next big speech before the Reichstag,<sup>2</sup> the Fuehrer will very strongly underline the Rome-Berlin Axis and will stress, with numerous examples from past years, the falseness of the policy pursued by the democratic states. It will further be necessary to refute the pretension that Eden, in England's name, can assume the airs of 'governess' to the world, by declaring that advice of this nature from England is of no interest to Germany. It is of little interest to the German Government if something arouses a good or bad impression in England; German policy is based on purely German interests. Germany's attitude to new conferences on world economy or raw materials is one of great distrust, and in this connection she continues to wait and see. Germany has been unofficially informed that they would be disposed to make concessions, but on condition that she first abandoned the four year plan.

With regard to French policy, Germany is somewhat in the dark. Lately France has given more signs than usual of wishing to reach a *modus vivendi* with Germany. The Fuehrer's reply to these approaches is that he has already several times shown his good will in this matter, and that France must make concrete proposals. Germany would, moreover, oppose all attempts to link economic advantages with political equivalents. On the German side it is the intention to treat economic questions on a purely commercial basis, since they are of the opinion that the solution of political questions should take place separately from the settlement of economic ones, and only on the basis of reasonable agreements.

In the present situation the sole guarantee of peace, however, appear to be those States which have at their head men who have behind them the whole people, and who can therefore also assume definite undertakings in the name of and with the approval of the peoples themselves. In the democratic countries one never knows if a Government with which one has reached an agreement today

<sup>1</sup>On 19th January, Eden had made a speech in the House of Commons, in which, referring to the Mediterranean and to Mussolini's Milan speech, he had reiterated that for Britain that sea was 'not a short-cut but an important main road.'

<sup>2</sup>The speech was made on 30th January; in it Hitler declared that "the period of so-called surprises is over. Germany, in possession of her equal rights, conscious of her European task, will loyally collaborate in the solution of those problems which interest us and other nations." He then referred in passing to 'the excellent and close relations with Italy' and then went on to make at some length a bitter attack on Eden.

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

will still be at the helm tomorrow.

At this point the Duce said that, as he sees it, the only true democracies are Germany and Italy; he also referred to the forthcoming speech by Blum in which the latter will very probably define his attitude to the question of volunteers.<sup>1</sup>

Ministerpresident Goering said that he had received reliable information that the Burgos<sup>2</sup> Government has instructed its representative in Berlin not to accept more volunteers for Spain.

The Duce noted this with satisfaction and declared that he, too, held that the Spanish National Government had now sufficient men and arms at its disposal. The joint note by Germany and Italy to Franco has meanwhile been delivered; further, on Monday, in the capitals of both countries, there will be delivered to the British diplomatic representatives the almost identical reply by Germany and Italy to the last English note.<sup>3</sup> These notes in reply will be published by the press on Monday afternoon.

Ministerpresident Goering then asked the Duce why Italy has not left the League of Nations. It had been perfectly understood in Germany that during the Abyssinian undertaking it was to the advantage of Italy to remain in the League. But in view of the fact that that undertaking was now successfully concluded, it is believed in Germany that Italy could leave the League; it is foreseeable that Hungary, Austria and some South American states would then follow. The League of Nations would then either break up, or would be openly reduced to what it had been from the beginning—a body representing Anglo-French interests.

The Duce replied that the Abyssinian question does not yet appear to be concluded. Recognition of the conquest by the League of Nations is still lacking; Italy wishes to wait for it. It is in a manner of speaking a dose of castor-oil which the League of Nations will have to swallow sooner or later.

Ministerpresident Goering then referred to the fact that Germany would be willing to return to the League of Nations within the framework of a new Locarno agreement; but that if in the meantime Italy were to state that she no longer wished to collaborate with the League, that would represent for Germany a fresh situation and her return to the League would not even be discussed. The question is not of present interest, but if Italy should reach a final decision with regard to the League, he would

<sup>1</sup>On 24th January, the French Premier, Léon Blum, made a speech at Lyons in which he drew a picture of the internal and foreign policy of France.

<sup>2</sup>Provisional seat of the Spanish Nationalist Government.

<sup>3</sup>On 25th January, the Italian and German Governments replied to the British memorandum of 6th January (vide page 78, note 1) with two notes of similar content, in which the two Governments declared themselves ready to support and accept 'any proposal which aimed at ensuring an authentic and general policy of non-intervention and its rigorous, effective and complete application, in the interests of the Spanish people and the supreme causes of peace and civilisation.'



## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

request her to inform Germany of it so that the latter could decide on the position to adopt.

The Duce replied that *de facto* Italy has left the League of Nations, and that she has no longer any sympathy for the institution at Geneva. Italy could therefore at the present moment also leave the League *de jure*. It must be remembered, however, that a member of the League of Nations, which has given notice of its desire to withdraw, remains a member for two more years during which it must pay its quota and participate in certain League activities.<sup>1</sup> In view of the fateful moment, which must come sooner or later, when the League of Nations will have to recognise the conquest of Abyssinia, Italy believes she will damage the League much more by continuing to belong to it. If the League recognises the conquest of Abyssinia, that will be almost tantamount to its own liquidation. If, on the other hand, the League does not recognise the conquest of Abyssinia, Italy will leave the League of Nations.

In answer to a question by Minister-president Goering as to when the League will have to take this decision, the Duce replied that the moment should come during the next League Assembly, if not before, at an extraordinary Assembly which is expected to decide on the admission of Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

Italy is convinced, on the other hand, that Austria, Hungary and Albania cannot for the moment follow her in the event of her leaving the League. Italy does not even wish to put pressure on these countries since the sacrifice would be too heavy for them. In view of strong Masonic influences Turkey will probably continue to remain in the League, unless there should be a strong disagreement with France on the question of the Sanjak.<sup>3</sup> England will naturally support the League of Nations to the last since she sees in it a guarantee of her world-wide dominion.

As far as the Duce's personal point of view is concerned, he believes that his contempt for the League of Nations—a contempt

<sup>1</sup>Article 1 of the League Covenant read: 'Any member of the League of Nations may withdraw from it, subject to two years' notice being given, provided at the time of withdrawal it had fulfilled all its international duties and all the obligations arising from this covenant.'

<sup>2</sup>On the basis of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 26th August, 1936, Egypt requested on 8th March, 1937, to enter the League, and was in fact admitted to the Assembly, which had met in an extraordinary session, on 26th May.

<sup>3</sup>The controversy which had arisen between Turkey and France—the mandatory power for Syria—over the political regime to be given to the Sanjak of Alexandretta, had been examined by the League Council in December, 1936, when it was decided to send a Commission to the spot. On 22nd December a meeting took place in Paris between the two Foreign Ministers, Rustu Aras and Delbos, which did not, however, lead to a basis for agreement. Negotiations were resumed on 21st January, 1937, and led on the 28th to a plan for settling the affair which was approved by the League Council and which recognised the autonomy of the Sanjak, while its foreign relations were entrusted to the Syrian Government. On the more important questions the Damascus Government was obliged to reach prior agreement with the Council of the League.

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

which he expressed anew in his last speech in Milan—is sufficiently known throughout the world.

Again asked for his impressions of his journey to Naples and Capri, Goering stated that he took with him a profound impression of the demonstrations of sympathy by the population, and expressed the hope that relations between the two countries might become ever closer and might find their expression in that clear line of common policy of which he had spoken to the Duce in more detail during their previous conversation.

The Duce replied that the common front of the two peoples had found its expression in the common military front in Spain. It was his wish that it should continue in the future.

Ministerpresident Goering then asked the Duce what he thought of political developments in the immediate future.

The Duce said that first of all the situation in Spain must be cleared up in accordance with the political interests and ideals of Italy and Germany. The policy of parallel action, which has existed between the two countries for two years with good results, must be continued. The two countries should continue to re-affirm their desire for peace; at the same time, however, they should perfect their armament so as to avoid any surprise. The anti-Bolshevik policy should be continued and, above all, any Russian influence in the West must be eliminated.

Should it be possible to reach a Franco-German *rapprochement*, Italy would be glad, since Germany would then have a free hand in the East, which is not the case at present. If German policy should succeed in severing the links between Paris and Moscow that would certainly be a very great success. He (the Duce) considers, however, that it is very difficult. At all events, Italy would be willing to give all possible support to that endeavour.

If a *rapprochement* between Germany and England were possible, Italy would be equally happy. But naturally such an agreement can be reached only on the basis of complete parity of rights and on a reciprocal basis, as indicated by the Fuehrer.

Above all, however, uniformity must be maintained in Italo-German policy, since this uniformity is the preliminary condition of assuring the independence of such a policy.

At this point Ministerpresident Goering asked what situation would arise if it should be impossible to reach agreement on the embargo on volunteers to Spain. In the Spanish question, Germany intends to go only to the limits of what is possible, thus preventing a general war from developing from the complications in Spain. It is to be feared that Moscow may make the Spanish question into a question of prestige and support the Spanish Red forces with her own troops to an ever greater extent.

The Duce replied that there are various possible solutions. First, Franco might gain a complete military success, in which case

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

the Spanish question would be solved on the purely military plane. This would naturally be the best outcome. Second, there was the possibility of a compromise between the two sides in Spain with the exclusion of the extremists.

On the question of forbidding volunteers, the position of Italy and Germany is in any case favourable. Either an embargo is reached, and in that case the maximum possible effort has been made by Italy with the recent embarkation of strong forces: the number of Italian volunteers has reached 44,000. Or an embargo is not agreed upon, and in that case Italy will continue to send volunteers to Spain. In the Spanish question, Italy intends to push matters to the limit without, however, running the risk of a general war. In any case, he does not believe in the possibility of such a conflict during 1937. Léon Blum and his collaborators wish to avoid it, and if they are shouting for 'aeroplanes and arms for Spain', they are doing it purely for reasons of internal policy. England, too, fears a general conflict, and Russia will certainly not let things go beyond the limit.

On the other hand, Russia has sent no cadre of volunteers, but only commanders and material, and would certainly adapt herself even to accepting a defeat of the Reds. It must be borne in mind that the aid to the Reds from the Communist side was intensified at the moment when the Spanish Reds had in any case stopped Franco in front of Madrid; in the Left-wing camp, spirits had therefore risen somewhat. If the situation should deteriorate for the Reds, the enthusiasm of the volunteers too would cease, for they stand by themselves and there will be no-one willing to have himself killed for a lost cause.

Count Ciano observed that the Italian Ambassador to Moscow,<sup>1</sup> who is at present in Rome, had informed him that the Bolsheviks are slowly preparing for a Red defeat in Spain and that they were exclusively concerned with reaching an international agreement to use on their own people as an excuse for the failure of their action in Spain. In short, Litvinov<sup>2</sup> is looking for a sort of alibi under the guise of an international agreement.

The Duce drew attention to the difficulty of the internal situation in Russia and repeated again that Russia has never sent her own troops to Spain. She had confined herself to sending the Communists of France, Belgium and Switzerland to join the Reds in Spain.

Ministerpresident Goering then spoke of England's intentions, asking the Duce what he thought of the possibility of England's attempting to create an invisible, but in certain circumstances effective, front including Russia against Italy and Germany.

<sup>1</sup>Augusto Rosso, appointed Ambassador to Moscow in November, 1936; he remained there until June, 1941.

<sup>2</sup>Maxim Litvinov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs from 21st July, 1930 until 3rd May, 1939; later Ambassador to Washington.

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

In this connection the Duce referred to the difficulties which exist between England and Japan, and agreed in passing with Ministerpresident Goering's opinion that the League of Nations already represented for England a sort of invisible alliance against Italy and Germany. There would, however, be no reason to worry since there is no reason why the machinery of the League, having failed at least three times, should suddenly function at the fourth attempt. It would, however, be advisable to treat English public opinion with a certain respect. The English Conservatives have a great fear of Bolshevism, and this fear could easily be exploited politically. This task would fall principally on Germany, since it is rather difficult for Italy to convince the English Conservatives in view of events in the Mediterranean.

Ministerpresident Goering drew attention to Germany's attempts to reach a *rapprochement* with English Conservative elements. In this connection it was necessary to bear in mind that the present English Government is fundamentally not Conservative but has outright Left-wing leanings. At all events, Germany is always willing to come to an agreement with England while maintaining good relations with Italy. For the rest, she was basing her security on a large increase in her land, sea and air armament, as well as in large scale economic autarchy for the attainment of which she is working with the maximum energy.

The Duce fully approved of this increase in power. He further declared that, as he saw it, the next great surprise for England will be provided by the growth of English Communism. That would be a good lesson, particularly for Mr. Eden himself.

Ministerpresident Goering said that the common people in England nourished feelings of sympathy for Germany. Conservative circles, it is true, are concerned at Germany's strength, but their greatest fear is Bolshevism, and even that fact does not in effect allow one to consider them as definitely willing to collaborate with Germany. The Foreign Office, on the other hand, whether for idealistic reasons or on grounds of tradition, maintains a position of absolute hostility to Germany. Moreover, a further obstacle to Anglo-German collaboration is to be found in the strong influence of Freemasons and Jews in the British Empire.

In this connection the Duce referred to the close connection between England and France. It is impossible to separate England and France. In spite of all the discords which arise now and again the two countries have too strong interests in common. The financial ties, too, are extraordinarily strong.

Ministerpresident Goering confirmed the close collaboration between the Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office. The two Ministers would not do anything without having previously made contact by telephone. Recently he (Goering) had refused English visitors particulars on German aviation and the possible direction of German

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

expansion because within 20 minutes the whole material would have been passed by telephone to the Quai d'Orsay by the Foreign Office. The English had to admit that he was right.

The Duce added that no opportunity should be lost of hampering Anglo-French friendship; such attempts should, however, be made with the utmost prudence so as not to produce the opposite result from that desired. Goering was in full agreement.

Ministerpresident Goering then said that the Fuehrer would be extraordinarily happy if the Duce would care to pay a visit to Germany. It would not only strongly underline the common policy of the two countries, but would give the Duce the opportunity of learning the situation in Germany at first hand, with his own eyes.

The Duce replied that a visit to Germany by him is within the bounds of possibility in view of the fact that he wishes to see the Fuehrer again and to confirm with his own eyes Germany's development.

Ministerpresident Goering said finally that, in his own personal opinion and in accordance with the close relations between Germany and Italy, it would certainly be useful if the Italian Government exercised its influence on the Austrian Government to cause the latter to adhere more faithfully to the Agreement of 11th July. The Austrian Government is exercising strong and completely useless pressure on pro-German circles in the country. If Chancellor Schuschnigg describes National Socialism as Public Enemy No. 1, he runs the risk of provoking internal reactions in Austria without the least interference on the part of Germany. It would therefore be advisable for the Austrian Government to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards these circles.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the Austrian Government is neither Fascist nor National Socialist, but clerical. It is therefore extremely possible that, one fine day, it may give way to a large extent to those Left-wing tendencies which continue to exist in Austria in considerable strength. The Austrian Government, in view of its exaggerated attitude towards National Socialism, fails to recognise the Communist peril. He (Goering) refers to all this solely with the desire to do what he can to avoid an internal conflict in Austria, which might, for example, occur in the event of the resignation of Glaise-Horstenau<sup>1</sup> or of other nationalist<sup>2</sup> ministers. These are the reasons which lead him to express the desire that the

<sup>1</sup>Glaise von Horstenau, former colonel in the Austro-Hungarian General Staff, in which capacity he betrayed during the first World War—according to German sources—Austrian military and political secrets to the Germans. The allegation was never denied. Under the Republic he served as director of the Austrian War Records Library in Vienna. As a result of the Austro-German Agreement of 11th July, 1936, Schuschnigg was compelled to include Glaise in his reconstructed cabinet, officially as Minister without Portfolio, unofficially however as spokesman and protector of the illegal Austrian Nazis. As Minister of the Interior (November, 1936—February, 1938) Glaise was largely responsible for Nazi infiltration into the public services. After the invasion of Austria he was rewarded with the rank of a general in the German

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

Agreement of 11th July be more carefully observed by the Austrian Government.

The Duce replies that the relations of Italy with Austria are based on the principle of respect for the independence of that country with due regard to its sensibility. He (the Duce) is perfectly aware that the Austrian people, in large part, has no sympathy for Italy; should he wish to influence the Austrian Government he would therefore have to proceed with great caution so as not to expose himself to the danger of an unpleasant reply. In view of the fact, however, that Ministerpresident Goering expressed a desire to that effect, he will attempt to influence the Austrian Government in the manner suggested, adding that full execution of the Agreement of 11th July is also in the interest of Italy, particularly since at the time the Agreement was concluded at Italy's wish. He (the Duce) has both personally and by implication pointed out to Schuschnigg that, in view of the German character of Austria, it would be absurd to pursue an anti-German policy. Regular implementation of the Agreement of 11th July is, on the other hand, of the utmost importance from the international point of view. Any new conflict between Germany and Austria would, for example, be immediately exploited by France and there would once again be talk of the 'watch on the Brenner'. Italy does not intend to allow herself to be bound in any way on this point.

Ministerpresident Goering remarked that the Austrian Government does not enjoy popular sympathy and maintains itself in power exclusively by employing brutal measures. But even these measures would have been of no avail to her if Germany had not abstained in the most absolute manner from intervening in Austrian internal affairs. On the German side, there was even willingness to help the Austrian Government. In accordance with a promise made to the Undersecretary of State, Schmidt, Goering had stressed in his Goslar speech that the Austrian Government must not be considered anti-German. On the same day, Schuschnigg described National Socialism as Public Enemy No. 1. In Germany, there is the impression that Austria is being deliberately held in reserve by as yet unidentified forces like a sort of hand grenade which, at the opportune moment, would serve to blow up the Italo-German front. In France, in England and in Russia they were probably of the opinion that the Italo-German agreement is not dangerous so long as there exists the possibility of blowing it up by means of Austria.

The Duce replied that an attempt of that nature would not be dangerous in so far as the aims of these obscure forces—which close Italo-German collaboration is capable of dealing with—are

Army and later served as German military representative in Zagreb, capital of Croatia. Placed on the list of war criminals both by the Austrians and the Yugoslavs he has, presumably, been executed in Yugoslavia.

<sup>2</sup>Nationalist, as used here by Goering, and on other occasions, refers, of course, not to Austrian nationalism, but to Pan-Germanism.

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

now known. It is sufficient to let it be known to the Austrian Government that it must in no case lend itself to any attempt at such a breach on the part of France, England and Russia.

Ministerpresident Goering said that this was one of the points on which there exists a certain divergence of views between Germany and Italy—the evaluation of the forces at work in Austria. Germany is of the opinion that the dominant tendencies in Austria are more internationally inclined than is apparently believed on the Italian side. For Germany's part, he can at all events give the assurance—and he believes that this is also true of Italy—that there will be no surprises as far as Austria is concerned. The Duce gave the same assurance, stressing that the guarantee is to be found in the very continuity of contacts between Italy and Germany.

Ministerpresident Goering fully confirmed, on his side, the need for continuous contacts between the two countries. He stressed that the Fuehrer had, in his presence, given the Minister for Foreign Affairs the directive to remain in continual contact with Count Ciano and to give visible evidence of this liaison—as a counterweight, as it were, to intimate Anglo-French collaboration—so that everyone would know in advance not to expect from Germany and Italy a different attitude to common political problems.

The Duce declared that their common policy applied above all to the great political problems of the world, and in the second place, to secondary matters, among which Austria is included. Here, too, continual contact can guarantee uniformity in policy, particularly since the two Powers must adapt their actions to the incessantly changing situation. He believes in 'evolution' in political forces and does not allow Italian policy to become 'mummified'. If, then, continual contact is maintained between the two countries, neither surprises nor conflicts will occur, and instead unity and collaboration will be attained.

Ministerpresident Goering referred to the Habsburg question, which, if it should actually arise, would involve points of the utmost importance. Germany would not in any event be able to tolerate the restoration of the Habsburgs in Austria, whatever might be the form (Kingdom, Regency, etc.) under which it was attempted to bring it about. That would mean the end of Austria.

The Duce replied that, for easily comprehensible historical reasons, the House of Habsburg finds no sympathy in Italy and that the restoration of the Habsburgs would produce a very bad impression on the Italian people. He has always warned the rulers of Austria not to play with the restoration, pointing out to them the moral dangers which Austria ran in this connection. Even to the leader of the Legitimists, Count [*sic*] Wiesner,<sup>1</sup> he had expressed himself very explicitly to that effect.

<sup>1</sup>Friedrich von Wiesner, former diplomat; took part in the peace negotiations of Brest-Litovsk (December, 1917—March, 1918).

## GOERING PUTS HIS CASE

Ministerpresident Goering stressed that the Habsburgs will always be anti-Italian and that on their return to Austria they would logically attempt to regain those territories which formerly belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Duce replied that he was perfectly aware that in the event of their restoration the Habsburgs—in order to minimise internal difficulties—would from the beginning have to seek a foreign enemy; it is to be foreseen that the bogey selected in this case would be Italy. He has, on the contrary, written an article against Otto von Habsburg and can give an assurance that all the information concerning plans for a marriage between Otto and Princess Maria<sup>1</sup> is completely unfounded. Princess Maria on the contrary, asked him personally to give a vigorous denial.

The conversation ended with some words of farewell from the Duce and renewed thanks from Ministerpresident Goering for the courteous welcome in Italy.

*During the journey from Rome to Berlin—January, 1937.*  
Sgd. Schmidt.

<sup>1</sup>Youngest daughter of Victor Emmanuel.



## VII

### AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

4th February—26th March, 1937.

*Surrounded by secrecy, the Italo-Yugoslav conversations decided upon in December had begun in January. Simultaneously one of the first results of the 'gentlemen's agreement' came to a head. During the Abyssinian war, Turkey had been one of the pillars of the Mediterranean system of mutual assistance promoted by Britain as a precaution against possible Italian reactions to the application of sanctions. London had obtained the adhesion of that country all the more promptly since from 1932 onwards relations between Rome and Ankara had gradually deteriorated. Italo-Turkish trade had not developed according to expectation; and the military installations completed by Italy in Leros and in other islands of the Dodecanese had aroused the suspicions and fears of neighbouring Turkey. Ankara did not forget what had preceded the London agreement—Italian aspirations to the Smyrna area and to Adalia. The agreement of the limits of territorial waters round the island of Castelrosso in 1932 had remained an isolated instance of mutual trust. The war in Abyssinia had seemed a confirmation of the expansionist tendencies of the Fascist regime, a development of the political programme which Mussolini had enunciated a year before the Abyssinian affair. On that occasion, Mussolini had said that the historical objectives of Italy were Asia and Africa, the south and the east. In this the Turks had seen a confirmation of Fascist designs on Anatolia. Finally, Italy had remained absent from the Montreux Conference and had refused to sign the diplomatic instrument which restored to Turkey full sovereignty over the Straits, and gave rights of passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles to the fleets of the States bordering on the Black Sea. All this amounted to a series of important modifications and innovations in the balance of power in the Mediterranean; but in the second half of 1936 the situation had changed. The 'gentlemen's agreement' had relaxed the attention which had been focused on the Mediterranean; the possibility arose of obtaining Italy's adhesion to the Convention of Montreux. When the opportunity of meeting Ciano presented itself to him, Rustu Aras did not require to be asked twice. The meeting was decided on in Ankara before the departure of the Turkish Foreign Minister for Geneva whither he*

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

*was summoned for the League Council. The choice of place fell on Milan; not so much for reasons of proximity to Geneva, as because ten years before in the same city, Rustu Aras had met Mussolini in order to bring into being a friendship pact between Italy and Turkey, which it was now a question of reanimating. But Rustu Aras did not know, even if he perhaps half suspected it, that the Milan meeting had its place in a vaster scheme of Fascist policy, of which Belgrade was the first goal.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTER, RUSTU ARAS.

*Milan, 4th February, 1937—XV*

The first conversation with Rustu Aras<sup>1</sup> was devoted to the examination of relations between the two countries and a review of the general situation.

Rustu Aras began by making exaggerated and clumsy declarations of friendship for Italy and of admiration for the Duce. I refrain from describing the series of acrobatics he performed in order to demonstrate, by citing a list of instances—all of them negative—his supposedly constantly favourable attitude towards Italy. I replied that, when we were about to begin a new page in Italo-Turkish relations, it was not worth while passing judgment on the past, on which we had definite views and documentary evidence—a fact which did not allow us to modify our mature conclusions.

I summarise briefly the various topics dealt with:

*Montreux Conference.* I recapitulated the reasons which had prevented us from initial participation in the Montreux Conference. He was aware of them. I said that, for the future, we foresaw no difficulty of any importance in the way of giving our support, but that we alone considered ourselves the proper judge of the choice of the opportune moment. Naturally we would give our support on two conditions: first, that we attained a status identical with that of the original signatory States; second, that we formulated the same reserves as Japan concerning the links between the Covenant and the Montreux Convention.

Aras approved our point of view without further debate and showed his satisfaction at our decisions.

I then drew his attention to the fact that, with regard to the Abyssinian situation, Turkey had not yet proceeded to a *de jure* recognition, while the other member States of the League had

<sup>1</sup>Rustu Aras <sup>2</sup>Tewfik, Foreign Minister from March, 1925 to November, 1938. From January, 1939 to February, 1942 he was Ambassador to London.

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

already done so. Aras told me that on his return to Constantinople he will attempt to settle the question by adopting in practice the Japanese formula, namely that which makes no difference between *de jure* and *de facto* recognition. He also said that, when recognising the Empire, as Turkey did some months ago, it had been his intention to make a gesture which was complete both formally and in substance.

I then spoke to him about the fortification of the Dodecanese. It is unpleasant for us, and quite futile, that the Turks should keep on protesting against these fortifications, regarding them as a threat aimed at Turkey. The Dodecanese are one link of the communications of the Empire whose security we intend to provide for in the most efficacious and complete manner.

Aras noted my statements and assured me that Turkey places complete credence in what had been said and that in future all polemics on the militarization of Leros<sup>1</sup> will be avoided.

*Status quo in the Mediterranean.* Aras expressed his very great satisfaction at the reaching of the 'gentlemen's agreement' between Italy and England. He re-affirmed that Turkey intends to develop her entire policy on the following basis: Black Sea, collaboration and friendship with Russia; Mediterranean, close understanding with England and Greece; friendly collaboration with England; respect for other countries. The only pacts which Turkey has in the Mediterranean are those binding her with Rome<sup>2</sup> and Athens,<sup>3</sup> with Italy and Greece; friendly collaboration with England; relations are based on parallel interests and activities. Relations with France have improved as a result of the agreement on the Sanjak. Paris is now pressing to have a treaty with Turkey, but Ankara is not in favour of it, and, in any case, the matter must be postponed until more favourable times. Nothing will be done without previous consultation with Italy. As far as Spain is concerned, notwithstanding the solid bonds of friendship which unite Turkey with Russia, the Turkish Government would not be at all favourable to the setting-up of a Soviet State in the Iberian Peninsula. In practice, Turkey has, in recent months, refused supplies to Russian transports which have instead found bases, supplies and support in France. Turkey while having no particular reasons for or against, would see with pleasure the consolidation of the Franco Government—for ideological reasons if for no other.

*Balkan Situation.* Friendship with Greece is the basis of all Turkish policy in the Balkans; then good relations with Yugo-

<sup>1</sup>*Island in the Dodecanese.*

<sup>2</sup>The Italo-Turkish Treaty of 30th May, 1928, for which a meeting between the head of the Italian Government and the Turkish Foreign Minister, Rustu Aras, held in Milan on 2nd April of the same year, had prepared the ground. That Treaty helped to create an element of stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and to determine, *inter alia*, the limits of territorial waters between Castellosso and the Anatolian coast.

<sup>3</sup>The Greco-Turkish Treaty of 1930 which put an end to the long period of distrust and tension in relations between Turkey and Greece.

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

slavia. These have not been altered by the recent terms of the Bulgarian-Yugoslav treaty<sup>1</sup>—on the contrary. Aras, personally, was very much in favour of this peaceful settlement between anti-Bolshevik Slavs, but he makes many reserves as to its solidity and stability. He stated that he views with pleasure our *rapprochement* with Yugoslavia, because it also facilitates the *rapprochement* between Yugoslavia and Hungary, a nation to which the Turkish people is attached by deep feelings of friendship. In accordance with the wish of the Yugoslavs I did not in any way discuss with Aras the present negotiations of which he is not informed.

During the second conversation, which took place during the afternoon, outstanding local questions or questions of administration were dealt with in detail.

Rustu Aras gave the fullest assurances of a favourable solution. We shall see.

He, in his turn, spoke of certain secondary problems, and—this is a matter of some importance—mentioned to me the plan for a telephone cable connecting Ankara-Athens-Tirana-Rome, the aim being to route through Italy all communications from Greece and Turkey which at present pass through central Europe and Paris. The project is interesting, all the more so since our contribution would be confined to laying the cable across the Adriatic.

At the conclusion of the second conversation, the journalists, to whom Aras made the statements with which we are already familiar,<sup>2</sup> were received. The *communiqué* drawn up by us beforehand was approved by him in its entirety, and he stressed his satisfaction that it served the purpose of giving an exact idea of the results of the conversation and of preparing the way for further developments of the collaboration which had already begun.

The visit had the air more of a ceremony of expiation than of a political meeting.

Rustu Aras knew he had come to Italy chiefly to make an act of contrition. One must admit that he recited the *mea culpa* with amazing impudence.

If he were still in the Government we would now see Titulescu, too, languidly mounting the steps of one of His Majesty's Prefectures.

*After leaving Milan to return to Turkey, Rustu Aras stopped for a day—5th February—at Belgrade. He saw Stoyadinovitch and took the opportunity to examine the political situation, which,*

<sup>1</sup>Signed on 24th January, 1937, in Belgrade by Stoyadinovitch and the Bulgarian Premier and Foreign Minister, George Kiosseivanov, the Treaty put an end, for the time being, to a traditional enmity which had its roots in the Macedonian question.

<sup>2</sup>He alludes to the statements made to the Press by Rustu Aras on the same day, 3rd February, as a comment on the official *communiqué* published at the end of the conversations, in which he had said that 'from detailed and friendly examination and exchange of views it has clearly emerged that there is no question dividing Turkey and Italy.'

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

*particularly in the Balkans, seemed to be going through a stage of rapid change. The signing of the Bulgar-Yugoslav Pact of 24th February, was symptomatic. The Balkan States, too, were feeling the results of the crisis produced by the civil war in Spain and were compelled, although reluctantly, to take up a position and to reveal their interests and sympathies, whether the moment was suitable or not. Episodes of purely secondary nature acquired a critical importance. For instance, the funeral of two Iron Guards, who had fallen in Spain fighting the 'Reds,' was solemnly celebrated in Bucharest. The Italian Minister, Sola, took part in the ceremony, and his gesture was interpreted not so much as a demonstration of solidarity with the Franco regime as an unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of Rumania. The clamour of the Opposition forced the Tatarescu Government to approach the Italian Government at the very moment when Italo-Rumanian relations showed signs of improving after the removal of Titulescu. The embarrassment of the Rumanian Government was obvious. The Rumanian Minister in Rome did not conceal it when Tatarescu ordered him to go to Ciano to have the incident cleared up.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE RUMANIAN MINISTER.

*Rome, 17th February, 1937—XV*

The Rumanian Minister called in connection with the incident caused by the attendance of Sola<sup>1</sup> at the funeral of two Iron Guards who had fallen in Spain.

M. Lugosianu gave me a long telegram signed by Tatarescu<sup>2</sup> to read, in which the facts were set out with remarkable objectivity. The telegram was very balanced. In it, among other things, Sola's services in facilitating good relations between Italy and Rumania were recognised, but the telegram concluded—evidently under pressure from Parliament and the Opposition Press—by asking the Minister Plenipotentiary to request from us a gesture which would settle the question.

Concentrating on this last request, the Minister then asked me if I would be prepared to recall Sola temporarily to Italy for consultations.

<sup>1</sup>Ugo Sola, Italian Minister in Bucharest from January, 1933 to March, 1939.

<sup>2</sup>Gheorghe Tatarescu, Rumanian statesman. After the fall of the Duca Cabinet on 5th January, 1934, he formed a new cabinet which remained in office until 20th December, 1937. On 10th February, 1938, he had been appointed Foreign Minister in the Cabinet led by the Patriarch, Miron Cristea, and remained in office until 30th March. From December, 1938 to June, 1939 he was Ambassador to Paris; from 23rd November till 4th July, 1940, head of the Government. He became once more Foreign Minister after the liberation in the Groza Government; resigned, to be succeeded by Anna Pauker, after non-Communist elements in the Government were ejected.

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

I said, No. Sola's departure from Rumania, even for a few days, would mean to world opinion the sacrifice of our representative. That would have harmful repercussions on relations between the two countries.

I told him that, first, Sola had attended the ceremony in a private capacity and on his own initiative, in civilian clothes and unaccompanied by any member of the Legation; second, that he had refrained from taking part in the political procession which had followed the religious ceremony; third, that the Fascist Government, far from disowning the action of our Minister, approved it in view of the fact that the two Legionaries had fallen fighting for a Government legally recognised by the Government in Rome. For those reasons we could not share the interpretation placed on it by the Rumanian Government and found nothing either irregular or at variance with diplomatic custom in Sola's action.

M. Lugosianu took note of my statement, which according to him would give President Tatarescu—who is animated by good intentions—something to hold on to in his efforts to settle the incident in a friendly manner.

In order to avoid aggravating the present situation we agreed that it would be advisable for the Press of both countries to avoid or cease making controversial statements about the incident.

*Towards the middle of March the Italo-Yugoslav conversations reached their conclusion. Both the text of the political agreement and that of the economic agreement were now settled. The political agreement pledged Italy and Yugoslavia to respect their common sea and land frontiers, not to have recourse to war as an instrument of national policy in their mutual relations, and not to tolerate or support on their territory any activity directed against the territorial integrity or the established order of the other country. In other words, an end was called to Italian irredentism aimed at Dalmatia, and to Slav irredentism aimed at Istria and Venezia Giulia. It was an undertaking of prime importance, if sincerely carried out, but at all events of the utmost importance in the eyes of Italy at that particular moment, since three days after the signing of the agreements, on the occasion of the exchange of ratifications, King Victor Emmanuel invested Prince Paul, Regent of Yugoslavia, through Count Viola di Campalto, master of ceremonies of the Foreign Ministry, with the insignia of the Order of the Annunciation, the highest Italian order. Vaguer and less binding were the terms in the political agreement referring to 'cases of international complication'; it was not for nothing that Stoyadinovitch told Ciano that he considered these agreements as a point of departure rather than a point of arrival. His ambitions to bring into being the Rome-Belgrade Axis may have accounted at least partly for this statement. The trade agreement was intended to increase the volume of goods exchanged, and committed the two Governments to the immediate*

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

*setting-up of a permanent Italo-Yugoslav economic committee, which had been proposed in vain since April, 1932.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE YUGOSLAV PRIME MINISTER, STOYADINOVITCH.

*Belgrade, 26th March, 1937—XV*

Before proceeding to signature of the documents already agreed on in Rome, M. Stoyadinovitch and I carried out a broad general review so as to exchange information on the foreign policy directives of both countries and to agree upon the steps to be taken in the future.

I first of all talked to M. Stoyadinovitch with great clearness, without pretence or reserve, attempting to explain to him that it was the Fascist Government's intention to give the Italo-Yugoslav agreement wide scope and real meaning.

After he had learned our attitude, our plans and our programme, he spoke with equal frankness. He began by saying that, given Yugoslavia's geographical position and in view of his country's political possibilities, he abandons the idea of adopting a European policy, far less a world policy, wishing instead to retain for Yugoslavia the principal and decisive role in the Balkan peninsula. Titulescu, who was led by personal vanity to wish to attempt things which were beyond him, often placed Rumania in a difficult position, from which even today the Rumanian Government has perhaps not succeeded in extricating itself.

Relations with Italy are henceforth defined by the agreements signed on the 25th March. But these agreements are no more than the first and most difficult step towards the alliance of the two countries, which Stoyadinovitch considers natural and inevitable for reasons of economic, political and historical necessity.

With France Yugoslavia's relations are now weakened. Recently France proposed to the Little Entente the conclusion of a military alliance which would aim at defending Czechoslovakia from a threat of German aggression. By all manner of pretexts Stoyadinovitch delayed an answer for four months. He now intends to delay it no longer, and proposes to make known his decisions on the occasion of the forthcoming meeting of the Little Entente, which will take place in Belgrade on April 1st.<sup>1</sup> It is to be a completely negative reply, as negative as will be the reply to the possible and probable proposal for bilateral alliances between France and Yugo-

<sup>1</sup>The meeting took place in Belgrade on 1st and 2nd April. An official *communiqué* was issued which, after recalling the traditional policy of the three States, said that their examination of events authorised 'the three Ministers to state that a certain improvement had taken place in the international situation, which allows them to hope that, in spite of the difficulties which remain to be overcome, the most difficult period is already past.'

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

slavia, and between France and the other countries of the Little Entente.

Stoyadinovitch explains the reasons for his new policy thus:

'We have not received anything from France and are not receiving anything now. Economically the value of the Little Entente to Yugoslavia is nil. Financially we have contracted debts with France which we pay regularly at a usurious rate. Militarily, France, together with Czechoslovakia, has been the principal source of arms. But the French Government has not presented us with a single bayonet. What we have had, we have paid for; just as we will pay Italy, in view of the fact that we intend in future to concentrate our orders for war materials in your country and in Germany.

'I will add that the moral and cultural influence which France has up till now exerted on our country has become truly deleterious and disruptive; Press and literature are the expressions of the Jewish, Masonic and Communistic mentality of the France of Blum.

'Moreover, when we committed ourselves to a military policy of collaboration with France, the situation was entirely different. It was foreseen that, as a result of a German offensive against Czechoslovakia, Italy's reaction would have been anti-German, and that she would have allowed French troops—or so they said in Paris—to cross the valley of the Po in order to fight against the troops of the Reich in Austria. All that has gone. Should Germany attack Czechoslovakia, we would, with weak and uncertain Rumanian aid, have to invade Hungary to go to the aid of Czechoslovakia. But even supposing that we could occupy all Hungary (and I consider it very unlikely) we would reach the Czech frontier in time only to meet the remains of Prague's defeated army. At our back we would have Hungary, ravaged and hostile. Before us, the victorious German armies. An unpleasant encounter and a risk which we cannot allow the Yugoslav people to run; all the more since it has no hostile feeling towards Hungary and no solidarity with Czechoslovakia. The forthcoming meeting at Belgrade will produce a further cooling-off in relations between France and Yugoslavia, and perhaps an open clash. I will be accused of selfishness. The French always accuse of selfishness anyone who is not disposed to let himself be killed for them. That leaves me completely indifferent since I have succeeded in concluding with Italy an agreement, which I consider fundamental for our country's policy.

'As far as the Little Entente is concerned, I consider that, formally at least, it will not undergo any transformation. It is entirely in Czechoslovakia's interest to let matters lie, so as not to make it obvious where the rift in the lute is, how it came there and how big it is. One thing is certain, that whereas relations between Yugoslavia and Rumania will remain unaltered, that is to say, firm and cordial, those between these two countries and Czechoslovakia will, on the contrary, be reduced to an empty formality.



## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

'Benes' has told me that when it is clear that it is impossible to count further on the Little Entente, on France and on the League of Nations, he will always find a means of coming to an agreement with the Germans. I for my part, advised him in that sense and will so advise him in future. Those—that is the French and the English—who advise him to resist Hitler to the last are the very people who advised the Negus to offer armed resistance to Italy. But for them, Haile Selassie would probably still be in Addis Ababa. Mussolini would have left him there as a dependent. The situation facing Czechoslovakia is analogous; should things become really complicated and should Germany go over to direct action, those who today are encouraging Prague's hostility to Berlin would go off, and Benes would find himself alone.'

Going on to examine Yugoslavia's relations with Austria, M. Stoyadinovitch said that he considers the *Anschluss* inevitable. Austria, as things are, has neither the moral nor material conditions for living. Nevertheless, we must delay it as long as possible. But this delay must be done by methods calculated not to provoke a conflict or even friction with Germany.

On the other hand, he had contemplated the Pan-German problem with greater equanimity ever since he considered an agreement between Yugoslavia and Italy possible in the first place, and alliance possible in the future. Once the *Anschluss* is an accomplished fact, all those countries who must oppose the German descent towards the Adriatic or along the Danube valley, will polarise around the Rome-Belgrade axis. The bloc which will arise will be such as to dissuade the Germans from any mad attempt.

It must be added that the fact that Germany has urged both in Rome and Belgrade an agreement between the Italians and Yugoslavs argues very favourably for the intentions—even the long term ones—of the German people. If Nazism were aiming at the Adriatic, it would have been unpardonable shortsightedness to facilitate a union, which was bound to come into operation in all sectors in the event of a Germany threat. On the contrary, in that case the policy would have been to make the misunderstandings and conflicts between Italy and Yugoslavia irremediable.

All that, however, applies to an unpredictable and certainly very distant future. At the present moment, relations between Yugoslavia and Germany are excellent. Whatever the world may think of them,

<sup>1</sup>Eduard Benes, former teacher, joined Prof. Thomas Masaryk's secret anti-Austrian organisation after the outbreak of war in 1914. Left Austria illegally in 1915 and worked together with Masaryk and the Slovak *émigré* Stefanik for the creation of an independent Czechoslovak State. Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia from 1918 to 1935, and from 1921 to 1922 also Premier. Elected President of the Republic in 1935. Resigned after Munich and went into exile, where he soon reassumed the rank and title of President. Always a strong supporter of Pan-Slavism he visited Moscow before Germany's defeat and resumed his former position under Russian auspices. Soon after the 1948 Communist coup he resigned on grounds of ill-health and died, a broken man in September of that year.

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

they have for some time been much better than relations between Yugoslavia and France. A great deal of military and commercial activity is developing between the two countries. Belgrade's collaboration with the Rome-Berlin axis may be considered ensured, for the further reason that that axis represents the effective bulwark against the menace most feared by Yugoslavia—that of Communism.

The influence of Reds has been harmful for all the peoples, but it appears particularly dangerous to Belgrade, where identity of race, affinity of temperament, the similarity of the language, would make the task of such Bolshevik propagandists as might succeed in carrying the infection of their ideas to the South Slavs particularly easy.

Communism—according to Stoyadinovitch—is not yet widely spread in Yugoslavia. It has taken a certain hold among the University students in Belgrade, where they claim a couple of hundred of the seven thousand youths who attend the University. It has fairly strong roots among the Croats and also, to a lesser degree, in certain Slovene centres. The Government is reacting energetically to this threat and above all makes active use of the solid and healthy barrier constituted by the small country proprietors and of the great agricultural masses who form the backbone of Yugoslavia.

Relations with Hungary have improved and tend to improve still further. Recently the Budapest Government offered Stoyadinovitch a unilateral pact of non-aggression which he finds acceptable in principle. Once that pact is concluded, Yugoslavia will after a short interval bring out a new statute for the Hungarian minorities which ought not to appear to be a pendant to the former, but which would, in actual fact, be agreed on with Hungary when it seemed advisable.

Stoyadinovitch intends to follow this line. I encouraged him, adding that the improvement of relations between Belgrade and Budapest will have a positive and beneficial effect on relations between Rome and Belgrade.

As far as Rumania is concerned, Stoyadinovitch displays greater optimism than he showed when Titulescu was Foreign Minister. He spoke of the latter in hard and contemptuous terms. He accused him of linking Rumania and Russia for personal ends, and perhaps because he had been corrupted outright by the latter. Titulescu had agreed with Moscow to the passage of Russian troops across Bessarabia,<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of attacking Germany. But King

<sup>1</sup>Bessarabia, which belonged originally to the Principality of Moldavia, then under Turkish suzerainty, was first taken by Russia in 1812. Returned to Rumania after the Crimean War, the province was retaken by the Russians in 1878, as the result of Turkey's military defeat and the decisions of the Congress of Berlin. In 1918 Bessarabia was occupied by the Austrians who left the administration, pending a plebiscite, to the Rumanians, although the population had already shown a strong desire for a status of autonomy, if not full independence from Russia as well as Rumania. The plebiscite, however, never took place, and in 1919 the Rumanian Government declared Bessarabia to be an integral part of the national territory. The U.S.S.R. never

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

Carol<sup>1</sup> and Talarescu confirmed during the recent conversations with Stoyadinovitch that this policy has now been completely disavowed and that they will not allow Russian troops to enter Bessarabia, which once invaded by them they would continue to occupy as oppressors in disguise, or even as open enemies.

Rumania is at present pursuing a policy of friendship with Yugoslavia and Poland, with an evident anti-Russian aim. But a pro-Yugoslav policy is particularly indispensable to the Bucharest Government. Stoyadinovitch does not attach much weight militarily to the Rumanians. But he attaches great importance to their agricultural resources and their unlimited reserves of petrol. 'In any event,' he said, 'either Rumania joins our system, and then we will have the grain and the oil wells at our disposal, or Rumania will be against us and, in a short time, we will have the wells just the same.'

I replied that our friendship with the Magyars prevented us from going too far in our relations with the Rumanians, although, apart from Hungarian revisionism, there is no dispute between Italy and Rumania. On the contrary, we had recently concluded a commercial treaty which almost trebles our trade. If one day, as I hoped and believed possible, there was a *modus vivendi* between Bucharest and Budapest, we would be able to do much more. For the time being, however, Stoyadinovitch could tell Antonescu<sup>2</sup> that, given the new situation which is developing in the Balkans and the Danubian region, Italy is willing to look on the Rumanian nation with more attention and greater cordiality than in the past.

Stoyadinovitch, who is optimistic over the pact between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, believes that relations between the two peoples will develop with increasing cordiality and that the union effected between Bulgarians and Serbs is destined to keep the future destinies of the two Slav nations parallel.

Good relations exist today between Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece; but, in reality, these relations are not very close, nor from what I was led to understand, lacking in numerous mental reserves for the future.

Today Yugoslavia is a country which is satisfied territorially. It is the one which gained most from the Great War. In 1912 Serbia had 2,400,000 inhabitants. After the Balkan war it rose to four

recognised the annexation, and for 20 years the question of Bessarabia remained a Russo-Rumanian bone of contention. In June, 1940 a Russian ultimatum forced Rumania to cede Bessarabia (and Northern Bukovina) to the Soviet Union. Both provinces now form part of the Ukraine.

<sup>1</sup>Carol II., King of Rumania, a Hohenzollern prince. In 1926, when still heir apparent, renounced the throne. On the death of his father, Ferdinand I., he was therefore succeeded by his own son, Prince Michael. At the beginning of June, 1930, he returned to his own country and was proclaimed king on 8th June, 1930. He abdicated on 6th September, 1940.

<sup>2</sup>Victor Antonescu, Rumanian diplomat, Minister to Paris during the first World War, Minister of Justice from 1933 to 1936. On 30th August of the same year he succeeded Titulescu in the post of Foreign Minister, which he filled until 20th September, 1937.

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

millions. Now the Yugoslavs number more than 15 millions and the birth rate is very promising. The problems which today confront Yugoslavia are not those of territorial expansion. For at least ten years the construction of public works, the development of the national economy, the raising of the spiritual and cultural level of the people will be the aims of the Government. But when one day horizons and new outlets will be required by the vigorous life of the young Yugoslav people, I think that it will be exactly in the direction of Greece and Turkey that the march will begin.

Stoyadinovitch dealt very little with Albania. The latter, he said, was of great importance when European diplomacy succeeded in keeping Italy and Yugoslavia apart and hostile. For us it represented a weapon aimed at our flank. But today, when the atmosphere is different, the Albanian problem returns to its true proportions: that of an unimportant local problem. I agreed with Stoyadinovitch. And as good faith demanded, I told him I was preparing in a few weeks' time to visit King Zog, just as I had visited the capitals of all allied and friendly countries. No objection on Stoyadinovitch's side.

Of the great and distant countries M. Stoyadinovitch spoke only of England as the one which, without any direct cause, claims or aspires to exercise a considerable influence on Yugoslav policy.

'During sanctions England attempted to thrust us much further than we went in the policy of hostility to Italy. When sanctions were over England continued to flatter us and to promise us aid in the Mediterranean. We have no need of it. Meanwhile I wonder if England is in a position to help us or any other country in the Mediterranean, in view of the fact that she has so often had to solicit our aid when she found herself at daggers drawn with you. And then, I have no faith in British re-armament. Poker is an Anglo-Saxon game and we all know that bluff is very often used in an attempt to save at least part of one's money. Even if England carries through her material re-armament, it will not mean that she has re-assumed her role in the world. She has depended too long on miracle-working by the League to be capable of grasping the sword. I set no store by the League of Nations. I belong to it, and must continue to do so, more owing to the force of public opinion and the force of inertia, than to personal conviction. I have the honour never to have been at Geneva, and that honour I intend to maintain always. The pact which I have formed with you, and which in spite of possible quibbles on interpretation is certainly a pact outside and perhaps even contrary to the League of Nations, is another proof of my meagre sympathy for Geneva. The formal recognition of the Italian Empire is another. When the French and English protest at what they call recognition *de jure*, I will reply that I had no means of making a recognition *de*

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

*facto*. And if they bewail the fact that I took this decision without informing them I will reply that not even London and Paris informed me when they closed the Legation at Addis Ababa. Similarly I propose to reply to France, whom I have never informed of the course of the Rome negotiations, in spite of the *Havas communiqués*, that the suggestion for an agreement with Italy actually came from their President of the Council. Then it was Laval,<sup>1</sup> now it is Blum. It is not my fault if in France the Government and opinion change so often.'

I have attempted to summarise at some length my conversations with M. Stoyadinovitch. They reflect his personality, which made a truly profound impression on me. Stoyadinovitch is a Fascist. If he is not one by virtue of an open declaration of party loyalty, he is certainly one by virtue of his conception of authority, of the State and of life. His position in the country is pre-eminent. With the support of Prince Paul, who declared to me that he had unlimited confidence in and cordial sympathy for him, and through working at the head of a party which includes the great majority of the country, Stoyadinovitch already has the marks of dictator in Yugoslavia, and is preparing to display them even more in the future. He is inspired by an unbending will and has a clear and open mind. His plans are fairly obvious from what he told me and what I have summarised above. With regard to Italy, he certainly intends to push on with the work of union and collaboration. Moreover, by signing the pact of 25th March, he has clearly undertaken—and he told me so—to follow this road. And from the impression I gained during my short stay in Yugoslavia I became convinced that there is a great advantage for us in intensifying communication with our Eastern neighbours.

In the economic field, too, Stoyadinovitch foresees even greater possibilities. As far as the military autarchy of the Italo-Yugoslav system is concerned, our neighbour's raw materials and our industrial equipment complement each other in a happy manner.

With this in view, Stoyadinovitch and I agreed to remain in contact so as to prepare and submit to the Duce, in due course, a vast plan of action.

With the Belgrade agreements, and above all in the atmosphere which Stoyadinovitch created at Belgrade, I believe that Italo-Yugoslav collaboration is destined to develop and to play a dominant role in the Balkan peninsula and the Danubian region. We, for our part, must now develop well-planned activity so as to make the most of these favourable conditions. Meanwhile we must take a long and broad view and not linger over little problems

<sup>1</sup>Pierre Laval. From 27th January, 1931 to 12th January, 1932, leader of a Right-Centre Government, then Foreign Minister from 9th October, 1934, in Flandin's Cabinet, and from 7th June, 1935, to January, 1936 also President of the Council. On 22nd June, 1940, he became Minister of State and the Vice-President of the Vichy Government. Executed for collaboration with the enemy on 15th October, 1945.

## AGREEMENT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

of a personal character, which certain interested parties are attempting and will attempt to keep alive in order to compromise the growing friendship and the future alliance between Italy and Yugoslavia.

We agreed with Stoyadinovitch to dispel immediately, and openly, any misunderstanding which might arise in the future or any suspicion which those powers, disappointed at our union, will inevitably attempt to instil into our minds in an attempt to trouble the waters, which we intend to keep untroubled.

With this in view, and in addition to normal diplomatic channels, Stoyadinovitch has accredited to me for any confidential and urgent communications that might arise his brother, who is closely associated with him. For similar cases, I suggested Anfuso<sup>1</sup> to him.

Furthermore, in view of the short distance, we will be able to see each other with a certain degree of frequency. In August he proposes, and I encouraged him, to spend a few days at the Venice Lido. Later, in November, he will be in Rome to pay his respects to the Duce. It is also possible to contemplate, in the future, a visit by the Regent Paul.

Industry, the banks and culture must adjust themselves towards this new, natural and unique outlet for Fascist Italy. In Belgrade I found, as in no other capital in the world, a profound knowledge of the Italian language and culture. Not only among old people of the higher classes, but also in the younger generations—those who came into the world when the conflict between the two Adriatic nations was at its most violent—some accurate knowledge of Italian was almost universal.

If that has been possible during the twenty years of bitter friction, there is every reason to believe that in the new atmosphere produced by the agreements—and which they will continue to produce—Italy will shortly be able, to our advantage, to take the place in Yugoslavia of France herself—the France which has always tried to keep us out with such care.

<sup>1</sup>Filippo Anfuso, Italian Diplomat, personal friend of Ciano, whose *chef de cabinet* he became, a post he filled until 1942 when he was appointed Minister to Rumania.

## VIII

### AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

22nd April—22nd May, 1937.

*In the first months of 1937 the perils which threatened Austrian independence began to be spoken of persistently and with a note of alarm. Nazi pressure was obvious, sheltering behind the agreements of 11th July and violating them systematically in letter and spirit day after day. The German annexionist drive, which had ample means at its disposal and did not hesitate to incite use of violence and fraud, kept the country in a state of continual unrest bordering on civil war. The Austrian Fatherland Front, on which Schuschnigg relied, contained this drive with ever greater difficulty as the Austrian Nazis, though representing only a minute fraction of the population,<sup>1</sup> were organised and led by numerous, highly trained German agents and agitators. They also had the open support of the entire German propaganda machinery, whereas Austrian patriotic propaganda was shackled by the July Agreement which Schuschnigg was determined to observe rigorously. Under such circumstances, and compelled to remain strictly on the defensive, it was virtually impossible for the security forces to maintain law and order; more or less violent incidents and clashes between patriots and Hitler's fifth column occurred almost daily. However, Austrian resistance was in any case strong enough to draw the attention of the European Chancelleries, and of world opinion, to Germany's campaign against her small neighbour—a campaign that had been going on almost without interruption since the day of Hitler's rise to power; and that resistance also induced Berlin to take every step that might help to terminate a situation which, if prolonged, would prove extremely embarrassing for the Reich. It was therefore decided that the Reich Foreign Minister should visit Vienna at the end of February. Von Neurath arrived in the Austrian capital on the 22nd of that month and stayed until the next day. His arrival was preceded by an announcement in the Berlin Deutsche Diplomatisch-Politische Korrespondenz in which it was stated that after the Agreement of the 11th July it was not necessary to proceed to any further formal contracts between the two countries. What required to be done to 'render relations between Austria and Germany normal' had, in fact, been done on*

<sup>1</sup>On the eve of the German invasion (13th March, 1938) the Nazi party in Austria had just under 80,000 registered members, i.e. about 2% of the adult population.

## AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

11th July, 1936. *It was a question, on the contrary, of giving practical expression to the principle then laid down: 'In view of the exceptional circumstances which obtained before the 11th July, it is clear that, from that point of view, there is still something to be done.'* This was a clear warning that Germany was far from satisfied with the advantages she had gained in the course of a few months. In fact, Austrian independence was in greater peril than ever because for economic and military reasons,<sup>1</sup> as well as for reasons of prestige, the 'liquidation of the Austrian problem' had become for the Reich a matter of pressing urgency. On the day after Neurath's arrival tumultuous incidents took place. The Viennese Nazis staged a demonstration which led to clashes and arrests, and provoked an immediate counter-demonstration of the Fatherland Front. Schuschnigg continued to resist desperately. A great open-air rally of the Front gave him an opportunity for a speech in which he declared in unequivocal terms that he would 'not cease to insist, as was natural, on the full and unlimited national sovereignty of our State'; and once again he addressed an appeal to Italy, whose constant understanding he could vouch for 'with quite exceptional satisfaction.' On the same occasion the Chancellor also formulated the question of a Habsburg restoration in precise terms, declaring that it was an internal affair of the State and not a subject 'for experiment'; it would be resolved if and when possible and opportune. This was another bid to secure the support of Rome, which was averse to the restoration, particularly since the Germans had both hinted and clearly stated that they would not hear of it.

Then Schuschnigg went to Budapest to accompany President Miklas, and took the opportunity to inform the Hungarians of his worries. He found more sympathy and understanding than on previous occasions. The policy of Gömbös, in spite of official declarations to the contrary, had had its day. Kánya watched the development of the international situation with uneasiness and was not indifferent to hints from London. Schuschnigg stayed in the Hungarian capital from 18th to 19th March. When he left an official statement had been agreed upon in which it was stated that the collaboration of the signatories of the Rome Protocols was 'the surest defence against any attempt to upset the peaceful development of Europe.'

<sup>1</sup>The most impatient annexationist among the members of the Reich Government was Hermann Goering, whose responsibilities included the execution of the Four Years Plan. At Cabinet meetings he repeatedly stressed the urgency of the *Anschluss*; the proposed development of Germany's industrial and military potential would be much delayed, or prove altogether impossible, unless the Reich obtained very soon full control of Austria's financial and industrial resources and of her raw materials and man power. Of course, German propaganda continued nevertheless to present Germany's economic situation as infinitely more favourable than that of Austria, and the *Anschluss* as the only means to save Austria from an economic catastrophe.



## AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

*On 25th March, Ciano signed the Belgrade agreements. How was this to be reconciled with the policy of the Rome Protocols? Was it not the sign of a change in Fascist foreign policy, and of a perilous detachment, if not absolute indifference to events in Central Europe? Probably it was not altogether by chance that the next day Hodza, the Czech Prime Minister, arrived in Vienna on a private visit. That told on the nerves of Berlin, and of Rome to a lesser degree. But Schuschnigg appeared to have decided to play all his cards without exception. On 9th April, Beck, too, visited Vienna. Then, on the 22nd Schuschnigg himself set off to meet Mussolini in Venice, where he had with him conversations lasting two days.*

### CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE DUCE AND CHANCELLOR SCHUSCHNIGG, IN THE PRESENCE OF COUNT CIANO.

*Venice, 22nd April, 1937—XIV*

Chancellor Schuschnigg began by stating that any change in the lines of his foreign policy, a change which has been recently referred to on several occasions, is entirely out of the question. Austrian policy continues to be guided by the Rome Protocols and, as far as possible, by the Agreement of 11th July. It is a fact that to-day relations with Germany are correct, but one must distinguish between relations with the Government and with the Party, which in its propaganda and actions is attempting to overstep the limits laid down in the Agreement of 11th July. The Press, too, with regard to which a useful truce had been observed, has in recent days resumed its attacks for trivial motives and with unprecedented violence. That makes the Chancellor's collaboration with Germany very difficult, since the radical elements of the National Front<sup>1</sup> take offence at these polemics and rebuke the Chancellor for his *rapprochement* with Berlin. Germany ought, at this moment, to make a gesture of goodwill to Austria, a gesture which has been long awaited. The circles which up to the present have shown themselves to be most easily influenced are the military ones; cordial relations have been established between the armed forces of the Federal Republic and of the Reich, but the Party, on the other hand, is continuing its policy of intensive propaganda, which very often takes on an anti-Italian tinge.

Nevertheless, the Chancellor intends to continue to pursue a policy of collaboration and peace with Germany, and to that end he pledges himself to apply the Agreement of 11th July in its entirety.

<sup>1</sup>Meaning the Austrian Fatherland Front.

## AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

He mentions the rumours current in Venice referring to Prince Rohan's<sup>1</sup> journey to Italy, and states that, as a result of these rumours, the negotiations which were in progress with National Socialist circles have come to a halt. (The Duce makes clear what Rohan did in Rome, and in particular that he did not even receive him, confining himself to reading the *aide-mémoire* left with the Foreign Minister by Rohan himself).

Austrian *émigrés* in Germany still have permission to carry on considerable activity. Their number remains very high, and it is calculated that there are between ten and twenty thousand.

Granted all the above, the Chancellor states that there is no possibility of authoritarian Austria's aligning herself with the ultra-democratic Paris-Prague axis. That would entail a change in internal policy which must be excluded.

There has been a great deal of talk recently of relations between Austria and Czechoslovakia. The two countries have, in fact, a common interest—that is, not to be attacked by Germany. It is obvious that a German attack on Czechoslovakia, leading to the semi-encirclement of Austria, would also be fatal to the latter. Nevertheless, no agreement of a political character exists or is foreseen between the two countries.

During his last visit to Vienna, Hodza<sup>2</sup> sketched the Czechoslovak position as follows: no military pact with Russia as yet; a tendency to improve relations with Poland; the impossibility of reaching an agreement with Hungary; constant German pressure; should all other ties fail, Czechoslovakia will have to throw herself into the arms of Russia. But that can still be avoided by other friendships; and that preferred above all others would be friendship with Italy.

As regards the much debated question of the Restoration, the Chancellor says it should be quite clear that he is never inspired by sheer obstinacy; but in view of the present international and internal situation, it must also be clear that this problem is not a real one (the Chancellor expressed himself in this sense to Neurath, too, during his recent visit to Vienna). Therefore, in practice, no surprise move will be forthcoming in that direction, but, as a matter of principle, he cannot renounce the Restoration. He confirms that the problem is of an internal character and that he has never thought

<sup>1</sup>Prince Karl Anton Rohan, editor of the *Europäische Revue* and founder of the Federation Internationale des Unions Intellectuelles. One of the earliest Nazi 'fellow-travellers' in Austria. Regarded as rather eccentric, he had little influence, and was taken seriously only by a small circle of semi-intellectuals.

<sup>2</sup>Milan Hodza, Slovak politician; one-time intimate of the heir-apparent, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, with whom he prepared plans for the federalisation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Czechoslovak Premier from November, 1935 until the Munich crisis, and from December, 1935 also Foreign Minister. Advocated plans for close economic co-operation among the Danubian States, and also for a political combination Prague-Vienna-Budapest. Resigned on 26th September, 1938, and left the country.

## AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

In that eventuality there is no doubt that France would move even more markedly to the Left, and that would certainly cause a revision of British policy since, historically, London has always opposed any openly revolutionary movement among her French neighbours.

To be precise, the reasons which make the Rome-Berlin axis solid are of two kinds. The first is a matter of foreign policy in so far as Italy must assure herself of a solid continental position in order to be able to continue to face the scarcely concealed British hostility in the Mediterranean. The 'gentlemen's agreement', signed in January, merely had the effect of producing a brief period of calm in relations between Rome and London, but very soon the situation became difficult again, and the two countries have shown that they continue to nourish mutual suspicions and distrust.

The other reason is the solidarity of the authoritarian regimes. It is obvious that between Fascism and Nazism there are substantial differences. We are Catholics, full of pride and respect for our religion. We do not admit the racial theories, particularly in their juridical consequences. In economy, too, we follow different systems. But on the positive side, the two regimes find themselves confronted by the same enemies, since the democratic bloc, whose active existence is being revealed increasingly openly, is attempting to isolate the two Powers in order to be able to eliminate them. All the speculation in the Press on the recent Degrelle<sup>1</sup> case, which was no more than an electoral fight, proves how the democracies wish, by any means, to limit the area of the countries with authoritarian regimes. In the failure of Degrelle they wished to see a defeat for Fascism and Nazism.

It is evident that the more they try to isolate us, the closer the two countries will come in a common ideological and national policy. In that case, the separation of Rome and Berlin would be most serious for both countries, since the democratic coalition would have a much easier task.

But it is here that the Austrian problem presents itself in its full importance. It is often thought that Austria must represent the point of friction in Italo-German relations, and therefore international speculation works to create difficulties.

The policy pursued by Austria up to now has produced good results; therefore she must continue to follow the same path. In Vienna, while emphasising Austria to be a German State, it will be necessary to affirm that there exist substantial differences due to religion, culture and a different *Weltanschauung*, and that friendly relations with Germany will be improved by Austrian national inde-

<sup>1</sup>Léon Degrelle, leader of the Rexist movement in Belgium, whose programme resembled closely those of the totalitarian regimes. After a spectacular electoral campaign Degrelle was defeated by 275,000 votes against 69,000. His victorious opponent was van Zeeland who stood for the Government of National Union and the existing constitutional order.

## AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

pendence. And since even in the Reich there are strong influences in favour of a *détente* with Austria, it is necessary to rely on them and consolidate them. The improved relations between military circles are certainly significant and promising. It is necessary to work actively in this direction.

As far as France is concerned, the Duce said that our relations can be summarised as follows: the further France moves to the Left, the further it moves away from us. It is a strange situation in view of the fact that there are no questions outstanding between the two countries; but, on the other hand, the attitude of concealed and irritating hostility is still unaltered. We realise that France is very annoyed by the existence of the Rome-Berlin Axis. If we think back to the war we shall see what importance the Italo-German agreement can have in French schemes. It was solely owing to Italy's benevolent attitude that the German advance was halted by French resistance. There is no doubt that even now the only dominating thought in the French mind is the security of the Rhine. That security seems uncertain if Italy has ties with Germany. However, one should not consider that Germany is preparing to attack France. The Germans boast of no territorial claims in that direction, and are well aware that to break the French defence line it would be necessary to sacrifice millions upon millions of men. It must be thought, on the contrary, that their energies will be directed entirely towards the East.

Another pawn which the Austrian Government must not neglect in its game for the maintenance of national independence is that represented by the good relations which exist between Budapest and Berlin. For very many reasons the Magyar Government must consider itself to have an interest in the existence of Austria; it should therefore be possible to bring Magyar influence to bear on the Government of the Reich. It is true that of late relations between Budapest and the Reich have cooled somewhat as a result of the strong Nazi propaganda which has been carried on, particularly among the groups of Germans resident in Hungary; however, it must be borne in mind that relations between the two countries are very close and that the line of conduct adopted by Hungary towards the possibility of the *Anschluss* would be given due consideration by the rulers of Germany.

Finally, explaining the trends and aims of the recent Belgrade agreement, the Duce runs rapidly over the history of the vicissitudes through which our relations with Yugoslavia have passed in recent years; one must, however, also consider the Belgrade Pact—apart from its having been suggested by the advisability of maintaining cordial relations with an adjoining country—in relation to our strategic situation in the Mediterranean. The political importance of Yugoslavia is evident, and everyone remembers that one of Britain's principal preoccupations, when tension arose in our relations with

## AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

London, was that of grouping under a single system of anti-Italian agreements Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece. It is true that, with the termination of sanctions, the agreements were declared to have lapsed, yet it seemed to us most useful to produce a new situation favourable to us. There are no questions outstanding between Italy and Yugoslavia. On the contrary, economic interests which are easily adaptable to trade and are mutually complementary, suggest and facilitate an agreement.

With regard to Albania, too, we have been able to reach an agreement. This question, which at one time was of prime importance to Italo-Yugoslav relations, has now been solved to our complete satisfaction. Albanian independence, which up till now has been guaranteed only by Italy, is today assured by Rome and by Belgrade. For that reason, too, the agreement has been favourably received in Albania. Furthermore, one must not forget that Yugoslavia has concluded a far-reaching and important political pact outside the framework of the League of Nations.

Finally, as regards the relations between the Belgrade Agreement and the Rome Protocols, the Duce considers that it may shortly be possible to make Yugoslavia adhere to the agreements between Italy, Austria and Hungary.

Summing up the conversation, the Duce concludes by saying that Italy confirms its policy aimed at maintaining Austrian independence and integrity, synchronising it and bringing it into harmony with the Rome-Berlin Axis.

In the next conversation, which took place on 23rd April at 11 o'clock between the Duce and Schuschnigg, the agenda relating to political questions having been exhausted, the following topics were discussed:

1. *Italo-Austrian Commercial Relations.* The Chancellor requested that, for political reasons, Austro-Italian trade should not be reduced, or at least not so as to be felt too much. The Duce said he would give instructions to Guarneri to examine the problem not only from the economic and financial points of view, but also bearing in mind the political needs of the moment.

2. *Treatment of the German-speaking Minorities in the Alto Adige.* Chancellor Schuschnigg requested and obtained information of our undertakings to the Yugoslavs on the treatment to be given to the Slovene minorities. He requested the setting up of a German language school at the Austrian Consulate but received the reply that such a request could not be considered since the Reich, too, would put forward a similar request, and it would be impossible for us to refuse.

Without going into details, the Chancellor requested and received the assurance that German-speaking minorities will not in any event receive treatment inferior to that given to non-Italian-speaking Slovenes.

## AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

Finally, some questions of minor importance also relating to the minorities of the Alto Adige were examined and satisfactorily solved.<sup>1</sup>

Two weeks later von Neurath went to Rome from 3rd to 5th May. The visit took place after a long series of meetings between Fascist and Nazi personalities, and another trip by Goering who had spent the last week of April in Italy and had had another conversation with Mussolini lasting three hours. (Goering had at that time a peculiar predilection for Italy; from 14th to 16th May he was in Venice where his stay was of a somewhat mysterious 'private' nature). It was on the eve of the first anniversary of the foundation of the Empire. A week later there was to take place the coronation ceremony of George VI of England, from which only Fascist Italy would be absent, because the Negus, too, had been invited.

### CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE DUCE AND VON NEURATH.

Rome, 3rd May, 1937—XIV

*Spain.* Baron von Neurath states that the Fuehrer has decided to despatch the 40 anti-tank guns requested for the Italian troops.

The Duce thanks him for the information and makes some observations on the slow progress of the war on Franco's side. It is his intention to continue to aid General Franco until the end of May; then, should nothing new transpire, he will offer him the following alternative: either a rapid advance or the withdrawal of the Italian troops. Therefore the Duce proposes that at the beginning of May a meeting should take place at Rome, in which the accredited representatives of the Fuehrer would also take part, to examine the situation and decide what action should be taken.

Baron von Neurath agrees and accepts the proposal.

*Locarno.* Baron von Neurath draws attention to the British attempt to separate Germany from Italy in the Locarno question by substituting for the old pact a series of bilateral pacts from which Italy would be automatically excluded.

*Austria.* Baron von Neurath states that the Fuehrer intends to keep as the basis of his policy towards Austria the Pact of 11th July. Although the question is the subject of lively interest, it is not considered by the Germans to be acute. They make one exception,

<sup>1</sup>On the second day of the Venice meeting Mussolini found it necessary to leave his Austrian guests to their own devices whilst he inspected a German 'Strength-through-Joy' ship which, dressed overall and flying an outsize swastika flag, had tied up not far from the Chancellor's hotel. Nor was he at the station when the Austrian party took the train to return to Vienna, 'urgent affairs of state' having recalled him, a few hours previously, to Rome. These two gestures amply confirmed what some observers had already begun to suspect, that the Duce had definitely made up his mind to abandon Austria to her fate.

## AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

however—that of the Habsburg Restoration, which would involve an immediate revision of German policy.

The Duce outlines to von Neurath the results of the recent meeting at Vienna, which may be rapidly summarised thus: Austria—a German state which cannot pursue any anti-German policy; no Austrian policy towards Prague, since it would cause Austria to be brought into the democratic system, and undermine the Rome Protocols; Restoration considered impracticable at any time, but Schuschnigg is unable to make a declaration of principle to that effect in view of the internal nature of the problem.

The Duce tells von Neurath that at bottom the Austrians have no other wish than to live in the shadow of mighty Germany while preserving their independence, and draws attention to the advisability of granting them treatment similar to that which Germany has given to the Poles with whom a *modus vivendi* has been reached, even if only by means of a mere *mariage de convenance*.

As far as Nazi collaboration in the Schuschnigg Government is concerned, the Duce says that he has advised Schuschnigg to accept representation of the Nationalist parties. He stresses, however, that there must be a difference in systems between Austria and Germany, since it would be impossible in Austria to adopt an anti-Catholic or too markedly anti-Semitic attitude.

*Relations with the Church:* Baron von Neurath, after having summarised the events which led to the acute state of tension between the Holy See and Germany,<sup>1</sup> says that it is the German Government's intention to reach a settlement with the Holy See on a basis similar to the agreement concluded between the Holy See and Italy.

The Duce agrees and advises action to be taken to this end—that is towards reaching an agreement on the following lines: politics are reserved for the State, religion is reserved for the Church.

*England:* Baron von Neurath says that English policy is being revealed with increasing clarity—to strike Italy first and then Germany, or even both countries together. British insistence on collective pacts aims at tying the hands of both authoritarian States. Germany is not disposed to accede to the proposals for collective pacts.

The Duce confirms that the Italian line of conduct is identical.

*Rumania:* Baron von Neurath says that Germany, too, now considers it advisable to attract Rumania into the political system of the Rome-Berlin Axis. He points out, however, the difficulties which will arise from the Hungarian side.

<sup>1</sup>Relationship between the Holy See and the Nazi Reich had begun to deteriorate almost immediately after the signing of the Concordat which the German Government disregarded more and more openly. The crisis here referred to arose from the publication, on 14th March, of the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* in which the Pope protested against flagrant violations of the Concordat and condemned the Nazi racial theories as utterly incompatible with Christianity.

## AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

The Duce states that, for his part, he is unwilling to take any action involving the Rumanians if the Hungarians have not first signified their approval.

Baron von Neurath is of the same opinion and they remain in agreement to that effect.

After a short discussion, during which internal conditions in Russia and relations between Germany, Italy and Japan are examined, the conversation ends.

*In the second half of May Victor Emmanuel and Queen Elena returned the visit paid by Admiral Horthy in the preceding autumn. Ciano accompanied the sovereigns to Budapest and met Kánya, who had just returned from the coronation of George VI.*

## CONVERSATION WITH DARÁNYI AND KÁNYA.

*Budapest, 19th-22nd May, 1937—XV*

During my conversations with President Darányi and his minister Kánya, we made a wide review of affairs, examining all problems which directly or indirectly concern the policy of both countries. I must first state that from the beginning of the conversations I noticed in Kánya a certain perplexity, due in particular to certain doubts he harboured over our policy towards Austria, our negotiations with Rumania, and our relations with England. These doubts were apparently not shared by President Darányi.

Later I shall say how I was able to give the necessary assurances to Kánya, with the result that at the end of the conversations, he explicitly stated that no uncertainty now existed in his mind with regard to our lines of action.

*Central Europe:* I told my interlocutors the results of the Venice conversations. My statement was, they said, in complete agreement with that already made by Schuschnigg on the occasion of his visit to Budapest.

During his conversations in London, Kánya had been repeatedly told by the English that, occupied in Africa with our colonial and pan-Islamic policy, and in Spain with the anti-Bolshevik campaign, we were preparing to cease to show any interest in the Austrian problem, which was entirely to the advantage of Nazi Germany. Eden has openly advised Kánya to attempt to form a breakwater against German pressure along with Austria and Czechoslovakia.

He had at the same time allowed it to be understood that English interest in events in Central Europe could not be other than platonic. Kánya, on the other hand, had replied that Hungary, while concerned at the possibility of the spread of German power towards the borders, neither believed it possible to change, nor intended to change, her line of policy, which was based on friendship with Italy and collaboration with Germany.



Kánya, however, had doubts over our active interest in Austrian independence, and Gayda's<sup>1</sup> article in particular had gone far to confirm him and (so he said) many Hungarian and Austrian circles in the opinion that Italy was gradually withdrawing from her position on the Austrian question.

I countered this with the familiar arguments, and told him that only one possibility would immediately jeopardise our support of Austria: that is Vienna's alignment with the Democratic-Bolshevik axis of Paris-Prague-Moscow.

Kánya noted my statement and appeared to be highly satisfied by it.

As far as relations with the Little Entente are concerned, I recounted the conversations with Stoyadinovitch with a wealth of detail and great precision, and illustrated the results of the Belgrade Pact. As far as Rumania is concerned I confirmed that, in spite of all rumours, in spite of the real interest we might have in bringing her into our system, we had no negotiations in hand nor did we intend to begin them until such time as Hungary had informed us that the situation produced by a pact between Rome and Bucharest was not only admissible, but was considered useful and acceptable to Hungarian policy.

Kánya, while sketching Hungarian relations with the three neighbouring States, told me that he had welcomed the Belgrade Pact with understanding, and that an absolute majority of Hungarians too, had realised the important reasons which had produced it and the beneficial results which it might have for the Magyar nation. Kánya further welcomed with the liveliest satisfaction my statements on our policy *vis-à-vis* Rumania. As far as the present situation of Hungary is concerned, he stressed that the only State with which it could draw up a pact at any moment is Czechoslovakia, which continually renews its offers. But that is not, for the present at least, amongst the intentions of the Hungarian Government. With Yugoslavia, relations have undergone a remarkable strengthening, but for the moment, as a result of the recent agreements reached in Belgrade at the meeting of the Little Entente, a separate agreement with Belgrade must be considered out of the question.

Relations are more difficult with Rumania, where the pressure on the Hungarian minorities is daily becoming greater and more painful, and where public opinion is distinctly anti-Hungarian in attitude.

As things are, Kánya does not foresee the possibility of an immediate development in the situation. There has been talk in some Hungarian circles of the possibility of carrying on negotiations with the three States simultaneously so as to arrive at bilateral

<sup>1</sup>Virginio Gayda, director of the official daily paper *Il Giornale d'Italia*, and, in particular, mouthpiece of the Foreign Minister.

pacts with each of them, leaving it to time to allow those pacts to survive which had some vitality in them, and to allow the one which is not wanted in Hungary to perish—that is to say, the pact with Czechoslovakia. However, no decision has been taken for the moment, and Kánya confirms that before initiating negotiations in any direction he will make contact with the Fascist Government.

*Relations with England:* During his London journey Kánya had conversations with Eden and Vansittart who declared that England earnestly desired to reach an understanding with Italy, and that in their opinion there should now be no substantial obstacle to it.

So much for what Kánya told me. But I believe, that, in reality, the two English politicians described our attitude to England as that of someone who aims at provoking a conflict, and that had deeply impressed Kánya. The latter repeated to me several times numerous reflections on English strength and on the democratic alliances which would automatically surround Great Britain were she attacked by us.

Darányi, who is less of a diplomat and more openly friendly towards us, then asked me the explicit question: 'Does Mussolini want to make war on England?'

I replied by listing the series of gestures made by us to make the resumption of relations with Britain possible, and the incontestable series of numerous provocations which have recently come from Britain. In the future, too, we wish to do our best to render relations with England normal, but meantime our eyes are not closed to reality, and, in the face of English preparations, our preparations are proceeding methodically and surely. Similarly there is no possibility of Italian withdrawal before any British aggression.

*Relations with France:* The Hungarians repeated that there have been renewed French attempts to weaken the political system of the Rome Protocols and to detach Hungary from the Rome-Berlin Axis, but French action has been only sporadic and principally with English support. Relations between Hungary and France remain on a completely conventional basis, all the more so since the Hungarian people feels no bond of sympathy with the French nation.

What were perhaps more persistent and better organised efforts were those made by the Paris Government on Schmidt, but Kánya assures me that the latter's behaviour was absolutely irreproachable during the visits to Paris and London.

Delbos was given clearly to understand that any strengthening of relations with France and even with Czechoslovakia was possible in the economic field, but that it was out of place to talk of new political ties.

As a result of requests addressed to me by Darányi in particular I gave assurances that, in spite of the new commercial treaty with

## AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE THREATENED

Yugoslavia,<sup>1</sup> Hungarian interests will be given special consideration by us. This was all the more favourably received since some Hungarian circles had been afraid of Yugoslav competition and had feared serious and damaging results from it.

Both Darányi and Kánya were anxious to express to me on more than one occasion their satisfaction at the conversations held during my stay in Budapest, and that they had served to dispel any uncertainty which might have arisen over our political aims.

During a conversation I had with him in the Royal Palace, Darányi clearly gave me to understand that he no longer had complete faith in Kánya. He is considering removing him from the Government, exercising great tact. This may occur in October, Kánya's disturbed state of health being taken as a pretext. Either Count Bethlen<sup>2</sup> or the present Hungarian Minister<sup>3</sup> in Bucharest may be called upon to take his place.

<sup>1</sup>This treaty had been concluded along with the political agreement of 25th March, 1937.

<sup>2</sup>Count Stephen Bethlen, leader of the Government from 14th April, 1921 to 19th August, 1931, then head of the Conservative Opposition.

<sup>3</sup>László Bardossy, Minister to Bucharest from 1934.

## IX

### LONDON UNVISITED

2nd June—26th June, 1937.

*In May and June the tension in Anglo-Italian relations had begun to become a matter for anxiety. The causes were numerous. One was Rome's policy towards the Moslem world, which Mussolini had underlined in his pompous speech of 18th March in Tripoli when he declared that Fascist Italy intended to 'show her sympathy towards Islam and towards Moslems throughout the world.' Other factors were the British rearmament programme, the progressive consolidation of the Rome-Berlin Axis, and, of course, profound differences of opinion and attitude regarding the war in Spain. Continual polemics in the Press had aggravated the situation until on 8th May the Fascist Government ordered the recall of all Italian journalists in London, while entry into Italy was forbidden to the English Press with only a few exceptions. Then at the end of May there came the Barletta incident. An Italian auxiliary vessel, attached to the maritime control organised by the Non-Intervention Committee was attacked on the 24th and 26th May in Palma, Majorca, by aircraft of the Valencia Republican Government and suffered casualties, including six officers killed. It was clear that the matter had nothing to do with London, particularly since alongside the Barletta there were also British ships which had run the same risk. The British Government sought even in these delicate circumstances to avoid a break.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE TURKISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 2nd June, 1937—XV*

The Turkish Ambassador called on me and communicated the following to me by order of his Foreign Minister:

1. During a conversation with Eden at Geneva, Rustu Aras gained the conviction that the English Government intends to make every effort necessary to reach a complete understanding with Italy. If there is a delay, it is due to the fact that large sections of English public opinion are still hostile to Fascism. Eden had, however, declared that as soon as the recent controversies had subsided, it was his intention to make a statement to the Commons aimed at restoring in full the Mediterranean Agreement of January and at preparing the basis for a wider Anglo-Italian understanding.

LONDON UNVISITED  
LONDON UNVISITED

2. Rustu Aras was greatly annoyed by the attitude adopted at Geneva towards the question of recognition of the Empire by the Polish delegate, Kormanowski. The procedure followed by the Poles was such as to prevent the Assembly from taking a positive decision. If Rustu Aras had been warned in time, he could not have failed to gather round himself all those elements who favour the emancipation of the Abkhazian affair in order to make an effective demonstration within the League itself. He did not associate himself with the attitude because he considered that this would have been of little use. Instead, to help himself in advance for the future, he intended to wait until the question will come up again and then not only to point out to the Turkish Ambassador that Rustu Aras's efforts should be taken into account by the Polish delegate, even if it had had no practical effect on the recognition of the Empire, would have been well received in Italy and would certainly have reinforced the bonds with Turkey.

[illegible]

Krems

CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR  
CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR

Revised 14th June, 1937 - A1

The Ambassador, who called on the pretext of presenting the decoration, informed me that von Neurath has received an invitation from the British Government to visit London at the end of August, from the British Government to visit London at the end of August, and declared that his Government considered the question finally closed, and that his Government considered the question finally closed, and that his Government considered the question finally closed.

## LONDON UNVISITED

of the month. 'Since it was a matter of an official invitation, von Neurath was unable to refuse.'

The Ambassador was also instructed to tell us that Neurath wishes to know what he can do in London in our favour.

I received the news with great coldness and pointed out to von Hassell that Neurath's journey to the British capital will undoubtedly give rise to interpretations which it would have been more convenient to avoid. If the mere presence of von Blomberg,<sup>1</sup> a military and non-political member of the Government of the Reich, on the occasion of a formal event like the coronation had the effect of causing rivers of ink to flow, I wondered what effect the Foreign Minister's journey—which cannot be denied to have a political nature—will have and what explanation will be given of it.

I asked von Hassell if an agenda for the conversations had already been prepared. The Ambassador replied that he was not aware of this, but that he would request information from Berlin at once. He is of the opinion, however, that nothing has even been considered since in the view of both the German and British Governments the road from London to Berlin is blocked by a large number of perhaps insurmountable obstacles. He added, finally, that he will do all he can to prevent any interpretation being put on Neurath's visit to London which might tend to weaken the Axis.

But today von Hassell, when giving me the news, could barely conceal his pleasure at the forthcoming political activity of his Minister, to which he has always actively contributed as far as lay in his power.

P.S. I have thought over the occasion when von Neurath recently told us that it would have been better for us to leave the London Committee after the bombardment of Almeria.

Was not the pretext for the journey he announced to us today perhaps already being prepared?

## CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 16th June, 1937—XV*

Von Hassell, who asked to see me this morning, made a communication identical in content, and therefore confirmed that:

- (a) it is a question of English initiative;
- (b) that no agenda has been decided;
- (c) that the conversations will probably be of a general nature, and related specifically to Spain.
- (d) that Neurath will make it clear to the English politicians that no *rapprochement* is possible between Berlin and London, without Rome.

<sup>1</sup>Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg, War Minister of the Reich from 30th January, 1933, to 5th February, 1938.

## LONDON UNVISITED

*It was probably no mere chance that on the following day the Popolo d'Italia published an article entitled 'Guadalajara' which once more went over events that were half forgotten and no longer subjects for journalistic controversy. It was from the pen of Mussolini and extremely violent in tone. It described the attitude of the international Press to the operations of 8th March as 'a vituperative campaign of lies and calumnies,' stated that 'in this act of brigandage the British Press has been second to none' and ended with the threat that 'even the dead of Guadalajara' would be avenged. By attempting to torpedo the German cruiser Leipzig on 18th June, the Republican Government did its part towards facilitating Rome's plan and upsetting the proposals put forward by London. It was sufficient to dispel whatever harmony had been achieved between the four Powers, and to lead von Neurath to postpone the journey to London fixed for the 25th June, a journey now fated not to take place.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 19th June, 1937—XV*

I received the Ambassador, Drummond, who had requested an audience on the pretext of thanking me for the gift sent on the occasion of his daughter's marriage.

He asked me if I had read the reply given by Eden in the House of Commons following a Labour question on missionaries in Abyssinia. I answered in the affirmative, and Drummond then added that the feeling of moderation which had guided the British Foreign Minister could certainly not have escaped me.

He then went on to speak to me about the article entitled 'Guadalajara'. He began by stating that he spoke in a purely private capacity and therefore with complete frankness. For some time Drummond, who has been advocating to his Government the necessity of quickly reaching an improvement in Anglo-Italian relations, has been giving assurances that the Duce was in favour of an understanding with Britain and that the Italians harboured no aggressive and threatening intentions towards England. The article on 'Guadalajara', which speaks openly of not far distant vendettas, had caused him to reflect and to ask himself if, in his desire to reach an agreement with Italy, he had not allowed himself to be misled.

I replied that he was certainly correct. Since last November the Duce has given proof of his wish to return to normal relations with Great Britain, and the conclusion of the 'gentlemen's agreement' was decisive proof of his desire. Even today I believe I may state that Mussolini is willing to come to an understanding with Great

Britain on the basis of an agreement which is complete and clears up all points—beginning naturally with recognition of the Empire in order to remove any possibility of misunderstanding and friction in the future.

As far as the 'Guadalajara' article is concerned, it will certainly not have escaped the British Ambassador what a wave of enthusiasm its publication caused in Italy. But far from making a *rapprochement* with Britain more difficult, I think it ought to facilitate it. In fact, as I had occasion to tell Drummond after the press incidents over the Bermeo<sup>1</sup> question, the Duce had been deeply wounded by the statements made by English papers about the Italian Army. The publication of the 'Guadalajara' article served, in my opinion, to clear up finally an episode on which so much had been erroneously and slanderously said; it also served, as far as the Duce himself is concerned, to allow him to consider relations with Great Britain with the calm which comes to a man who has been able to express completely what was in his heart.

As far as the 'vendetta' is concerned, Drummond must not forget that our volunteers are still in Spain, and it is obviously on Spanish soil that action is envisaged. The taking of Bilbao is an indication.<sup>2</sup>

Drummond replied that he noted my point of view with much pleasure and that, for his part, he intended to push on the work of conciliation as much as possible. However, he saw no possibility of arriving at juridical recognition of the Empire before the spring meeting at Geneva. He asked me if I had any suggestions to make in this connection.

I replied that I had no formula ready to place before him, but that I would in any case think over his request; that, for the moment, I confined myself to thanking him for what he had said and telling him that the statements which Eden had recently communicated to me through Grandi had been received with pleasure.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 25th June, 1937—XV

The Ambassador, Sir Eric Drummond, visited me to draw my attention to today's article by Farinacci<sup>3</sup> *Break off Relations*, and in particular to the last two paragraphs of that article. Drummond pointed out that the author is a member of the Fascist Grand

<sup>1</sup>Bermeo had been occupied on 30th April by a 'Black Arrow' battalion. It remained besieged, however, by Republican forces and was only liberated on 3rd May.

<sup>2</sup>The Franco offensive in Biscay Province, which had begun on 31st March, had reached its final objective on 19th June with the occupation of Bilbao by the Navarra and 'Black Arrow' brigades, and another brigade of Italian 'volunteers'.

<sup>3</sup>Roberto Farinacci, Secretary of the Fascist Party until 1926, member of the Fascist Grand Council from 1935.



## LONDON UNVISITED

Council, and therefore a personality who has a definite political responsibility. He added that the article was an infringement of the agreement reached on Press relations between the two countries, an infringement which might produce reactions in the British Press. Finally he told me that he was particularly concerned over the fact that Farinacci is occasionally credited with being selected by the Duce to act as a kind of *avant-garde* against certain specific objectives.

I replied to Drummond that the article reflected nothing beyond the opinion of its author, who had written on his own initiative and without any prompting. I most emphatically rebutted the possibility of Farinacci's being considered a mouthpiece of the Duce, who—as Drummond well knows—has no need of interpreters, but is accustomed to express his thoughts and proposals with directness and with great clarity. In the case in point I could add that I was informed that the Duce had no knowledge of the article until it was published, and that he had not given Farinacci instructions of any kind.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 26th June, 1937—XV

Von Hassell talked to me this morning on the following points:

1. *Volunteers.* The Ambassador asked me for our attitude to the proposal advanced in London for the withdrawal of an equal number of volunteers from both sides, under British control. Although the German Ambassador was not very definite on the subject, he did not conceal that von Neurath wished to avoid any position which would place a great responsibility on Germany.

I replied that, as things stood, we did not, in the main, intend to withdraw the volunteers from Spain. I realised that we could not simply put this proposition before the London Committee but that we had to entrench ourselves under cover of delaying and obstructionist tactics. It must first of all be borne in mind that, since the system of control was practically disrupted, one could not talk of total or partial evacuation of volunteers until a new system of control had come into force so as to give us a guarantee that any forces which were withdrawn did not then re-enter in secret elsewhere. On the other hand, we, who had been the first to advance the idea of prohibiting the departure of volunteers and political agitators, were in a strong position for maintaining that those who were today fighting in Spain on the Nationalist side went there of their own free will, and that therefore we cannot use force to withdraw them from an enterprise to which we did not commit them. The withdrawal of volunteers should be requested by the parties to the struggle; only then could it be considered, bearing in mind,

however, that the composition of the Red volunteer forces is too heterogeneous to guarantee that a withdrawal could take place in an effective and completely satisfactory manner.

I told von Hassell that by using these arguments we could certainly delay any decision on the subject of volunteers for a long time. Von Hassell noted what I said and assured me that on the German side everything will be done to sabotage the discussion.

In reply to my specific question, he said that, according to his information, the Fuehrer is personally opposed to the withdrawal of volunteers; von Neurath less so, if only from the technical point of view.

2. *Control System.* The German Ambassador inquired what our programme and attitude was in view of the situation which has arisen since the withdrawal of Italy and Germany from the control system. He knew of various proposals, which are being aired in London and Paris for filling the gaps caused by the withdrawal of Italian and German components; the Reich Government, for its part, has instructed Ribbentrop not to put forward any proposals, but to confine himself to preventing any new situation producing a disequilibrium in favour of the Valencia Government.

I told von Hassell that we considered that no alteration to or substitution in the control system could be made other than by the Non-Intervention Committee, on which the Reich and Italy are represented, and that therefore, in practice, no decision to replace us can be taken without our consent. I then went on to point out to von Hassell that the actual position in which we are placed by withdrawing our forces from the control system has turned out to be completely unfavourable to ourselves, since the control is in practice reduced to an Anglo-French blockade against the Nationalist Government. By immediately making the gesture of withdrawal along with Germany, the Italian Government had intended to give the Government of the Reich a proof of its absolute solidarity. But today we must call the attention of the Reich Government to the situation which has been created.

Von Hassell agreed on the practical disadvantages which the abandonment of the control system by Germany and Italy has entailed for us and the Nationalist Government, and asked me if we had elaborated any proposal as to the line we should take in the future so as to redress the balance.

I told him that no proposal had in fact been studied by us, but that, after discussing the question with the Duce and receiving instructions from him, I would reserve the right to return to the subject with von Hassell, and therefore requested him to transmit to his Government our point of view on the present situation.

He confirmed that the German Government intends to act in full accord with the Fascist Government.

CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 26th June, 1937—XV*

I again received the Ambassador this evening and communicated the following to him:

1. *Volunteers*: I confirmed, on this subject, what I had already said in our previous conversation about our intentions and plan of action.

2. *Control*: In view of the fact that no decision can be taken outside the Non-Intervention Committee, Italy and Germany will have to oppose the proposal aimed at transforming the international control into an Anglo-French blockade to the prejudice of White Spain. This would inevitably occur if France and Great Britain or satellite Powers of theirs were intended to fill the gaps caused by Italo-German withdrawal. Our representatives in London must let it be clearly understood that if such an eventuality should arise, Italy and Germany would be constrained to denounce the whole Non-Intervention Agreement and withdraw from the London Committee itself.

In order, however, to make an offer of constructive collaboration, Italy and Germany may state that they are willing to study a new system of control. In such a system, freed from the imperfections which led to the present crisis, our two countries could resume their positions.

I told von Hassell that the above represented our suggestion for the line of conduct to be mutually adopted. Naturally we were waiting to learn the opinion of the Reich Government and its objections, if any.

Von Hassell learned of our proposals with much interest and, in principle, showed himself to be distinctly in favour of their acceptance.

At his request I replied that, as far as the new control system was concerned, we were not preparing to submit concrete proposals for the examination of the committee, but that we would, on the contrary, consider it more convenient to wait for a scheme from France and Britain.

## X

### ‘VERY BENEVOLENT NEUTRALITY’

19th July—31st July, 1937.

*While the situation in Europe became graver and more involved, from the Far East there came rumours of war. On 26th February, 1936, a group of young Japanese officers had killed some of the most prominent members of the Okada Government and attempted a coup d'état. The Hirota Cabinet had not succeeded in solving any of the major problems which beset the country, from the financial one due to the increasing demands of the military to that of stabilising relations with China. The Cabinet had imagined it could escape from the isolation in which it had found itself since the beginning of hostilities in China by entering into the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany. But the only result had been a deterioration of relations with the U.S.S.R. The elections of 30th April, 1937, had not led to any improvement. On the contrary they had led the Hayashi Government to take up an openly unconstitutional attitude. The nomination of Naotake Sato, Japanese Ambassador to Paris, as Foreign Minister, had seemed like the prelude to a radical change in Japan's foreign policy—a disposition to treat China on a basis of parity and to establish more intimate relations with Great Britain and the United States. But that change had not in fact taken place. The military regained the ascendancy, and after the fall of the Hayashi Cabinet on 4th June, the Government formed by Prince Fumimaro Konoye could not be described as different in outlook from its predecessors. The replacement of Sato by Hirota in the field of foreign politics spoke only too clearly for itself. Shortly afterwards there occurred near Peking the incident of the Marco Polo bridge—an exchange of shots between Chinese and Japanese troops, as a result of which the Sino-Japanese war was to flare up again.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 19th July, 1937—XV

I received the Ambassador, Sugimara, who was paying a farewell visit.

Referring<sup>1</sup> to the situation which has arisen in Northern China,

## VERY BENEVOLENT NEUTRALITY

he told me that the Chinese attitude is such as to make one consider the outbreak of the conflict almost inevitable. The Japanese are concentrating numerous divisions, and since their transport requires a certain time, an immediate beginning of operations is not to be expected. But, unless Chinese policy changes, it will inevitably take place shortly. It is the Japanese conviction that, behind the Chinese, Moscow is carrying on its anti-Japanese manoeuvres. It is, therefore, not to be excluded that the Chinese conflict may at a given moment spread also to the Soviets. On this topic, however, Sugimara made many reservations, since he considers that the Russians will be wary of attacking the Japanese, and since, in his opinion, Japanese military circles themselves would prefer to improve their armament before measuring themselves against Russia. Meanwhile, and this he told me in strict confidence, the first Japanese action will aim at cutting the line of communication which exists between Irkutsk and Peking, so as to prevent the Russian and Chinese forces from joining up.

This being the case, Sugimara drew my attention to the fact that the Chinese Air Force is instructed by Italian officers, and largely composed of Italian material. He said, he quite realised that if the Italians had not gained a footing in Chinese aviation the same work would have been done by the English, the Americans, or even by the Russians themselves. He felt, however, he must call my attention to the position of our officers in the event of an open conflict between China and Japan.

I replied that in China our activities had been purely instructional and commercial, and that, in any case, our pilots were not obliged to participate in operations with the Chinese forces. I assured him that, while for the moment the problem did not arise, we would not fail to examine and solve the problem, bearing in mind the firm bonds of friendship which unite us with Japan and its anti-Bolshevik activities in the Far East.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 31st July, 1937—XV*

I received an official visit from the Japanese Ambassador, M. Hotta,<sup>1</sup> who, on instructions from his Foreign Minister, handed me the attached a letter. Further to the contents of the letter, M. Hotta told me that the Japanese Government would, in order to develop the conversations previously held with Sugimara, be very happy to give more concrete expression to the excellent relations existing between the Italian and Japanese empires.

<sup>1</sup>Masaaki Hotta, Japanese Ambassador to Rome from 3rd July, 1937 to October, 1940.

## VERY BENEVOLENT NEUTRALITY

On my enquiring what proposals he intended to put forward, M. Hotta told me that in the opinion of the Japanese Government it would be possible and convenient to bring about an agreement of an anti-Communist nature between Italy and Japan, of the kind previously reached between Tokyo and Berlin. This understanding could then be completed by a secret agreement which M. Hotta defined as being one 'of technical collaboration in the military field.' Repeating in part what our Ambassador, Auriti, had cabled to us some months ago, M. Hotta stressed the advisability of establishing very intensive collaboration in the military field between Italy and Japan, collaboration which would allow each country to avail itself of the other's aid, but would above all allow Japan—in view of the very high level of Italian technique—to benefit from our collaboration in the naval and aeronautical field. Japan, in fact, obtains large supplies of arms from abroad; by means of an agreement of this nature it would be the intention of the Japanese Government to concentrate these purchases in Italy and also to make use of the technical experience of our specialist officers.

Such an agreement would automatically carry with it a pact of 'very, very benevolent neutrality.'

In Japanese opinion such an agreement would be of great advantage to both peoples. In Tokyo, too, there is a great desire to reach an agreement with England, and they are very pleased at present at the more favourable turn taken in relations between Rome and London. It is considered that the sensation caused by firm friendship between Italy and Japan, coming as a supplement to that already existing between Rome and Berlin and Berlin and Tokyo, must exercise a salutary moderating influence on the London Government, which will be reminded of the harm it suffers from collaboration with the Bolshevik or Bolshevising system represented by Moscow and Paris. I thanked the Ambassador for his communication and said I would not fail to answer as soon as possible the courteous letter which the Foreign Minister had addressed to me.

As regards the proposal advanced by him of closer and more concrete collaboration between Rome and Tokyo, I would talk to him again after having placed the matter before the Duce and receiving orders from him. For the present I could tell him, however, that there is among the Fascist Government and people, a lively feeling of sympathy and friendship for Japan, whose loyal recognition of the Empire will not therefore be forgotten. Of this sympathy, moreover, there is an obvious proof in our attitude during the present Sino-Japanese crisis.

I agreed with the Japanese Ambassador that I would resume contact with him in the course of the next few days.

## XI

### MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS

15th August—2nd October, 1937.

*During August a gradual improvement in relations between London and Rome had led to an exchange of autograph letters between Chamberlain and Mussolini, dated 27th July and 2nd August respectively. Chamberlain had expressed his regret that 'Anglo-Italian relations were still far from the old feeling of mutual trust and affection' and stated that the British Government was 'willing to begin conversations at any time' in order to do away with any misunderstanding or suspicion. Mussolini had reciprocated by declaring that he was prepared to resume conversations 'to ensure an understanding' between the two countries. They had even gone as far as to fix the date for the opening of the conversations—the beginning of September, when Sir Eric Drummond would be back in Rome after his summer leave. Subsequent statements by Ciano —'the road is now clear' on 4th August—and by Mussolini in Palermo on 20th August—'I think it may be possible to reach a lasting reconciliation'—gave the impression that the clouds were really about to lift from Anglo-Italian relations. But it was in the second half of August that the series of accidents began which were to render navigation in the Mediterranean dangerous for some time. A number of ships were torpedoed by mysterious submarines. The connection with the Spanish Civil War was evident. Barely camouflaged, these Italian submarines were ordered to carry out an extremely disagreeable and dangerous task. There was talk of pirates and piracy, and it seemed that in the Mediterranean a new and more serious conflict was developing. The rapprochement between Rome and London suffered a new setback.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH CHARGÉ d'AFFAIRES.

The Chargé d'affaires, Ingram, called and discussed with me the position in the Far East, saying that the British Government wished to know if, from personal experience, I had any suggestions to make on the situation which has arisen in Shanghai and which appears so similar to that in 1932. In any event, the British Government wished to learn our point of view, and asked if we were willing to

## MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS

take part in collective diplomatic action by the Western Powers to attempt to improve the situation in the Far East.

I replied to Ingram that I thanked the British Government for the courteous question, but that I did not consider that I could make any suggestion since it was precisely my Chinese experience which told me that in the Far East apparently similar situations may be substantially different. Events of 1932 should therefore be kept in view only up to a certain point. As regards our general attitude to the Sino-Japanese conflict, I drew Mr. Ingram's attention to the fact that Italy, being bound by friendship to both the warring countries, intended to maintain an attitude of strict neutrality while expressing the wish that rapid settlement of the conflict might be achieved. More urgent still is a settlement in that difficult sector, Shanghai. I had sent instructions to that effect to H.M. representatives in the Far East, refraining, however, from giving detailed instructions and preferring to trust to their judgment on specific situations, since my very knowledge of the countries and of Far Eastern circles suggested to me that it was advisable to give a free hand to H.M. representatives up to a certain point, so as to permit them to deal with events which might develop with extraordinary rapidity.

I finally assured Mr. Ingram that, while we did not consider it was for us to take the initiative, we would be willing to support any diplomatic action by the Western Powers which aimed at re-establishing peace and order in the Far East, or even at limiting and isolating the area of the conflict.

Mr. Ingram thanked me cordially for my statement, and during our conversation was eager to stress particularly the great importance which England attaches to close collaboration with Italy in all departments of international life.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 15th August, 1937—XV*

Señor Conde informed me that he had received instructions from the Salamanca Government to draw our attention to the distant and somewhat unfriendly attitude of Vienna towards General Franco. He was also instructed to call attention to the attitude of the Austrian representative on the Non-Intervention Committee, who has frequently shown himself not only cold but frankly hostile to Nationalist Spain, and completely subservient to England; the Austrian Government has always avoided making any gesture which might express sympathy for and solidarity with the Nationalists.

General Franco therefore turns to us and asks us to intervene in Vienna and let it be known that greater sympathy with Nationalist Spain would be most advisable. Spain desires the following: if



## MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS

possible, full recognition of the Franco Government; if not, recognition of belligerent rights; finally, should it be impossible to make even that concession, the acceptance of an official agent of Franco, such as Switzerland accepted recently.

A similar approach is being made simultaneously by the Spanish Ambassador in Berlin.

I assured Conde that I would not fail to take appropriate action in Vienna to have the Generalissimo's wishes accepted, as far as possible, by the Austrian Government.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH CHARGÉ d'AFFAIRES.

Rome, 23rd August, 1937—XV

The British Chargé d'affaires, Mr. Ingram, after stating that what he was about to say did not represent a formal approach, wished to call my attention to events which have lately occurred in the Mediterranean and are still occurring.<sup>1</sup>

First, the air attack on a British steamship, an attack which, according to information reaching the British Government, had been carried out by aircraft based on Palma, and which some would even identify as Italian planes.

Second, for some days there had been repeated cases of torpedo attacks and shelling aimed at ships of various nationalities. British ships had, in fact, not been molested, but some captains had reported that they had been followed and watched with particular assiduity by Italian surface vessels. The British Government was careful not to connect the two, but could not but be concerned at the continual incidents in the Mediterranean. The actual spot at which the two steamships had been torpedoed and sunk—which was very far from Spanish bases—led one to reflect on the situation.

Mr. Ingram was anxious to inform me that the British Government did not wish to make the least protest to us through his communication. It merely wished to inform us of its earnest desire that the atmosphere between Great Britain and Italy, which had so fortunately been cleared, should not be troubled by unforeseeable and deplorable complications.

I replied to Mr. Ingram that we, for our part, intended, like the British Government, to maintain the peaceful atmosphere which existed between the two countries as a result of recent diplomatic clarifications.

<sup>1</sup>On 10th August, the British steamship *British Corporal* had been attacked by aircraft in the Mediterranean at the same time as the Italian vessel, *Mongiolo*. On 17th August, the Spanish Republican steamer, *Ciudad de Cadiz*, had been sunk by a submarine of unknown nationality close to the Turkish coast. On 19th August, the Spanish Republican vessel *Armuro* had been hit by a torpedo, again from a submarine of unknown nationality, off the Turkish coast.

## MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS

As regards the incidents of which Ingram had spoken to me, I was not in a position to give him any explanation. On the same day on which their steamship was attacked, the *Mongioia* was subjected to a bombing attack by unidentified aircraft, an attack which was in its effects much more grave than that experienced by the *British Corporal*. Since the *Mongioia*, besides flying the national flag, had also painted on its sides two tricolours, which were visible from a great distance, I could not admit that it was a case of misunderstanding, and must therefore maintain my opinion that the attacker was a Red plane. Since the attack on the English steamer occurred more or less at the same time and in similar circumstances, everything led one to presume that those responsible belonged to the same side.

As regards the torpedoing of ships in the Mediterranean, I was happy to state that up to the present England and Italy could not be involved, since no vessel belonging to those two Powers had been subjected to an attack by Spanish nationalist vessels.

While quite unable to give Ingram any information on the increased activity of the Franco Navy, I must reply, as regards the attacks at the entrance of the Dardanelles, that modern submarines can very easily operate at great distances from their bases. As far as encounters between British vessels and Italian warships were concerned, I limited myself to pointing out that in the Mediterranean it is very easy to come across units of our fleet which, particularly at this time of the year, are frequently on the move in connection with their exercises.

I noted with pleasure that his communication to me was in no sense an official approach. On the contrary, I recognised in this exchange of views, which aimed at maintaining a favourable atmosphere between the two countries, a fresh proof of the real desire for collaboration.

Ingram said he was fully satisfied with my answers.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH CHARGÉ d'AFFAIRES.

*Rome, 27th August, 1937—XV*

The British Chargé d'affaires, Mr. Ingram, informed me, following instructions received from the Foreign Office, that, because of the death of his brother, Sir Eric Drummond will not be able to come to Rome at the end of September. That naturally will entail a delay in the beginning of conversations. The Foreign Office, while expressing its regret at this delay, was anxious to state that there is absolutely no new element in the intentions or wishes of the British Government, and that the delay must be attributed solely to the

## MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS

above-mentioned fact of Drummond's inability to return to his post.

To Ingram's inquiry as to what could be done to avoid false interpretations of the delay, I replied that, in my opinion, there was nothing that could be done except to publish his statement to me in some English paper. The Italian Press would pick it up.

Ingram asked me for details of the Duce's visit to Germany.<sup>1</sup> I replied that it had been decided on in principle and that it would take place in the last fortnight in September. For the moment I was unable to give him further information.

Finally, Ingram, having first stated that he spoke in the same spirit as in our last conversation—that is with the aim of avoiding any incident in the Mediterranean which might disturb the atmosphere between our two countries—presented me with an *aide-mémoire* relating to observations carried out by our Air Force on British vessels. I replied to Ingram that such reconnaissances form part of the normal duties of the Air Force, and that I did not grasp what 'harm' they could have caused to British shipping. Ingram agreed that it was not a question of incidents worthy of note, and stressed the English desire to eliminate any future possibility of misunderstanding.

*On the 6th September the French and British Governments addressed to all the Powers concerned an invitation to a conference, to be held at Nyon, near Geneva, with the aim of agreeing on the measures required to stop acts of aggression in the Mediterranean. But on the same day the Soviet Chargé d'affaires in Rome handed Count Ciano a note which attributed to Italy responsibility for the torpedoing of two Soviet ships, and, in consequence, requested compensation for the loss suffered. Ciano rejected both the responsibility and the request. On the 8th Russia returned to the charge, without receiving a reply; but Mussolini used it as a pretext for refusing to participate in the Nyon Conference. 'It is obvious,' said an Italian note to the Governments in London and Paris, 'that the Fascist Government must postpone any decision of an affirmative nature until the incident which has arisen from the dispatch of the Note of the Soviet Government—on the subject of whose invitation to the Conference certain reservations should be made—has been satisfactorily settled.' The Nyon Conference was held all the same; the agreement with which it concluded in practice excluded Italy from control activity in the Mediterranean—with the exception of the Tyrrhenian Sea (the Adriatic had not been discussed). This produced further sharp reactions by Rome, which refused to recognise the agreement, and wordy battles followed. But in the meantime no other incidents had occurred, and the U.S.S.R. had not been allowed to take part in patrolling the Mediterranean.*

<sup>1</sup>Mussolini visited Berlin from 25th to 29th September.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR RIBBENTROP'S

Rome, 2nd October<sup>1</sup> in will also  
was not

The Ambassador, Sir Eric Drummond, who remained so good with me after the departure of the French Chargé d'affaires me that during his absence from Rome he had seen with deep regret the progressive deterioration in Anglo-Italian relations which in summer had seemed to be moving towards a favourable solution. Observing the situation from England, he had been able to see that two facts in particular had brought about the new crisis in Anglo-Italian relations:

- (i) the telegram of congratulations sent by the Duce to Franco after the conquest of Santander,<sup>1</sup> and
- (ii) Italy's refusal to participate in the Nyon conference at which direct contact with the British and French Foreign Ministers would have allowed many obscure points to be cleared up and would have produced an improvement in international relations.

However, since the British Government earnestly desired to re-establish Anglo-Italian relations on a cordial plane, he left me an *aide-mémoire*.

In order to avoid opening a discussion, I confined myself to noting the delivery of the *aide-mémoire* and to telling him that I would not fail to examine it with care and to pass it to the Duce for instructions.

<sup>1</sup>Mussolini had replied to the telegram sent to him by Franco on 27th August on the occasion of the taking of Santander as follows: 'I am particularly glad that during ten days of hard fighting the Italian legionary troops have made a valiant contribution to the splendid victory of Santander, and that that contribution finds today, in your telegram, the recognition to which they aspired. This comradeship of arms—now so close—is a guarantee of the final victory which will liberate Spain and the Mediterranean from all threats to the civilisation we share.'

## XII

### ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

*On 25th November, 1936, at the conclusion of secret negotiations which had lasted several months, Ribbentrop, who was still Ambassador to London, and the Japanese Ambassador, Mushakoji, signed in Berlin an Anti-Comintern Pact, which pledged both states to collaborate in the repression of Communist activity by the exchange of information, consultations and the adoption of severe measures against all those, at home or abroad, who placed themselves at the service of that organisation. Germany and Japan further agreed to address to those other States which felt themselves threatened by the activities of the Comintern an invitation to adhere to the agreement. The invitation to Fascist Italy could not be more obvious, all the more so since the signing of the pact between Germany and Japan took place shortly after Ciano's visit to Berlin and the signing of the secret protocols between Germany and Italy, in which the anti-Communist note—with an eye on the Civil War in Spain—was very pronounced. The development of the European situation led Hitler, with forthcoming developments in the Nazi policy of expansion and hegemony in view, to ensure the support, or at least the consent, of Fascist Italy.*

#### CONVERSATION WITH THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 20th October, 1937—XV*

The Japanese Ambassador, after apologising for the long delay, informed me of what has passed between himself and his Government on the subject of the projected anti-Communist agreement between Italy and Japan. He told me that he had first of all received instructions from his Government to proceed to an anti-Communist agreement with Italy, adding verbally that Japan undertook on her honour to maintain benevolent neutrality and to enter into discussions in the event of a conflict. Correspondence with Tokyo was continuing in order to transform this oral pledge into a written agreement or, at any rate, into something more precise, in accordance with the wishes I had expressed to him, when he was informed by his Government that the situation had assumed a new aspect since the German Government inclined towards stipulating a three

## ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

Power pact. He therefore informed me in advance of Ribbentrop's visit, and added that the Japanese Ambassador<sup>1</sup> to Berlin will also arrive tomorrow. He could not add anything, since he was not acquainted with further details. But he requested me to be so good as to resume contact with him after having met Ribbentrop.

The conversation between the Japanese Ambassador and myself was therefore continued on other topics connected with the situation in the Far East, and he showed himself confident in the inevitable military success of his compatriots.

As far as the Nine Power Conference<sup>2</sup> is concerned, he told me that he quite realised the advisability of Italian participation, by means of which it would be easy for us to render useful service to the Japanese cause.

I then received the German Ambassador who was accompanied by Herr Raumer, Ribbentrop's Chief Counsellor, with whom I had had brief contact last year on the subject of anti-Communist action. Herr Raumer handed me the outline-protocol and the supplementary protocol which are attached.<sup>3</sup> I asked Herr Raumer whether, since it was a question of our adhering to a pact already existing between two other Powers, he was in a position to inform me what other agreements of a confidential nature existed between Germany and Japan, in view of the fact that I had frequently heard such agreements spoken of by official German personalities.

Herr Raumer was either unwilling or unable to reply, stating that it was for von Ribbentrop to enter into a discussion on this subject. For my part, I thanked him for his communication and reserved any reply until I had received orders from the Duce.

## CONVERSATION WITH HERR VON RIBBENTROP.

*Rome, 22nd October, 1937—XV*

During today's conversation with von Ribbentrop we discussed the German proposal for Italy's adhesion to the anti-Bolshevik Pact between Germany and Japan, which in consequence would be transformed into a tripartite pact. After sketching to him our relations with Japan, I told Ribbentrop that the Duce was in principle in favour of acceptance after examining the formula proposed to us by

<sup>1</sup>Kintomo Mushakoji.

<sup>2</sup>The Conference was held in Brussels from 3rd to 24th November. Japan alone declined the invitation, stating in a note on 27th October that it rejected the accusation of having violated the 9-Power Treaty, and that it could arrive at a policy of collaboration in China only when the Nanking Government had revised its attitude. On 15th November a resolution was presented by the United States, Great Britain and France, condemning the Japanese argument—a resolution to which the Italian delegate declared himself sharply opposed. A stalemate having been reached, the conference was adjourned *sine die* without any results having been attained.

<sup>3</sup>These documents reproduced in substance the text of the protocol and the supplementary protocol signed by Germany and Japan on 25th November, 1936, in Berlin.

## ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

Raumer. On the other hand, since we were about to enter an already existing political system, I considered it advisable for Ribbentrop to explain to us what other relations of a confidential nature exist between Germany and Japan. I also told him that at the beginning of our conversations with Japan we had let it be known that we would, for our part, be in favour of completing the anti-Communist pact with a secret agreement providing for benevolent neutrality in all cases, and for consultations in some special contingencies. The Japanese Ambassador, when informing me that his Government did not at the present moment contemplate putting such a formula in writing, told me, however, that he was authorised to give verbally the Japanese people's word of honour to that effect.

Ribbentrop confirmed that there also exists between Germany and Japan a sort of 'gentlemen's agreement' which, while it is based on the identical ideologies of these countries, was developed by constant contact and force of circumstances. Recently it has been decided to set up an air line from Tokyo to Berlin. There is technical liaison between the members of the two General Staffs. Relations between the two countries are becoming closer in every field. This gives rise to collaboration which finds expression in the political field. The general nature of the 'gentlemen's agreement' was anti-Russian. Ribbentrop said that, for the present, he was not in a position to tell me whether the Japanese Government were ready to give an undertaking of a political nature to Italy and Germany. He had, however, cabled to Tokyo putting forward that proposal. However, even should it not be accepted immediately, Ribbentrop is not excessively worried since he sees in a possible Tripartite Anti-Communist Pact the basis for a very wide and far-reaching understanding between the three nations. I agreed with Ribbentrop that we would meet again in the Duce's room at 18.30.

*The signing of the protocol containing Italy's adhesion to the Anti-Comintern Pact was delayed until some days later than expected and did not take place in Munich but in Rome. On 6th November, in the Palazzo Chigi, Ciano, Ribbentrop and Hotta put their signatures to the document and immediately published the text which referred to the 1936 protocol and drew attention to the statement that Italy had been considered 'an original signatory' along with Germany and Japan.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE DUCE.

*Rome, 22nd October, 1937—XV (18.30 hrs.)*

After having presented the Fuehrer's personal greetings to the Duce, Ribbentrop gave an account of the genesis of the pact between Germany and Japan. He described how he had wished to learn by means of his mission to London how far England would be willing

## ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

to go towards meeting Germany's wishes, and towards recognising her vital interests. Today he must frankly admit that his mission failed. Several recent British gestures—among them the Conservative Party vote against the cession of Colonies to Germany—have proved that the interests of the two countries are irreconcilable. At one point he had even thought of attracting England into the sphere of the anti-Communist countries. That has been impossible, since in England the Communist peril is neither felt nor fully understood.

He went on to put forward the reasons in favour of transforming the pact between Germany and Japan into a Tripartite Pact by the adhesion of Italy.

The Duce said that, for his part, he was willing and happy to accept the German proposal. He also added that it had first been his wish to complement the anti-Communist pact by a political clause stipulating neutrality and consultations. He realised, however, that it was undesirable to press Japan, thus avoiding the impression that we wish to take advantage of the very special situation in which that country finds itself as a result of the Chinese conflict, and to extort special concessions from her.

Von Ribbentrop approved of the Duce's decision, repeating what he had already said to me on the subject of the inevitable development of a Pact such as we were about to make. When negotiations between Germany and Japan began it was said that it was a question of constructing a small wooden bridge so as to be able to build later a great permanent iron bridge between the two nations. That is a formula which can be usefully repeated.

As regards the signing of the Pact, it has been decided that it will take place during the next few days, probably in Munich, since Ribbentrop—in view of his position as Ambassador to London—could not sign a pact of this kind in Italy. It was agreed in principle that the complete text of the protocol will be published. On these last two questions, however, von Ribbentrop reserved an answer until he had received the Fuehrer's approval.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 6th November, 1937—XV*

The Japanese Ambassador, who wished to confirm what he had heard from German sources concerning the Duce's acceptance in principle of the Tripartite Anti-Communist Pact, asked for an audience.

I told him that the Duce had in fact expressed himself to Ribbentrop in these terms, and that it now rested with the Chancellories to agree on certain secondary formal questions while awaiting approval from Tokyo, which had not yet arrived.

The Ambassador repeated that Tokyo agrees in principle and



## ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

that it reserves the right to suggest certain slight modifications in the text which will be communicated to us as soon as possible. Meanwhile he wished to repeat that even if the Italo-Japanese Pact was about to be replaced by a Tripartite Pact, the verbal pledge of benevolent neutrality and collaboration in case of international difficulties was still in full force. He had instructions to say that the Japanese people will never be able to forget the proof of solidarity which Italy is giving at this moment in their history, and will not let the occasion pass without indications that they were ready to repay their debt of gratitude to us in full. The Ambassador added that he regretted that for the moment it was not possible to make a pledge to that effect in writing. Italy must however believe that Japan's word is as good as any formal document.

I thanked the Ambassador for his communication, which I noted, adding that, in my opinion, circumstances and events will suggest and determine the inevitable future development of the friendship between the two countries.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE DUCE AND HERR VON RIBBENTROP.

*Rome, 6th November, 1937—XV*

The Duce, having stressed the great importance of the three power anti-Communist pact concluded that morning, declared that, in his opinion, it represents the first basic gesture which will lead to a much closer understanding of a political and military nature between the three powers. Meanwhile, since we are henceforth so deeply interested in events in the Far East, we must carefully examine what is happening there. Since the Brussels conference is doomed to failure, the Duce wonders whether it would not be advisable for Germany and Italy to examine the possibility of mediation by us to put an end to the conflict. A settlement in the Far East would be useful in order to maintain Japan's military power intact for any future anti-Russian operation. On the other hand, it must prove acceptable to China too, for having offered resistance which was rendered possible by the 'critical period of disembarkation,' she has no means of halting the Japanese advance.

Ribbentrop says that he agrees with the Duce on the advisability of a settlement in the Far East. During a recent conversation with the representative of Prince Kanin, Chief of the Japanese General Staff, who is in actual fact the man who forced through these military operations against the will of the Anglophile and Liberal Foreign Minister, he learned that the army, too, wishes to end operations as quickly as possible, but only after having decisively defeated the Chinese forces. Peace with the Government of Chiang Kai-shek is impossible. It is therefore necessary to

## ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

establish a new government in Nanking. Approaches have been made to the German Embassy in Japan with a view to obtaining mediation. But the Japanese General Staff is completely ignorant of these approaches. The Fuehrer would be favourable to mediation, which would have to be based on two points: China's adherence to the Tripartite Anti-Communist Pact and a Japanese undertaking to respect all foreign interests in China.

The Duce agrees with this point of view, and says that any eventual negotiations of that nature will have to be conducted in the most absolute secrecy, with the condition that once its aim has been achieved, the mediation shall be made public. Any indiscretion would be prejudicial to success.

Ciano points out that in a few days time there will arrive in Rome the Chinese Propaganda Minister, Che Kung-po, who is very influential in Kuomintang circles, belongs to a group which is sharply hostile to Chiang Kai-shek, and is a friend of Wang Ching-wei.<sup>1</sup> Possibly M. Che Kung-po could be presented and we could take advantage of his presence for confidential conversations.

The Duce and Ribbentrop agree.

They then go on to discuss the repercussions which the Anti-Communist pact will have in other countries.

Ribbentrop considers that British reaction will be more lively than is expected, since the Pact will be interpreted as the alliance of the aggressive nations against the satisfied countries. England will increase her efforts to have closer relations with America. But that would probably have happened even without the Tripartite Agreement.

The Duce agrees with the view that American ill-humour will be increased by an agreement with Japan, which is considered, for no apparent reason, to be the United States' traditional and potential enemy. However, once again the Americans will do nothing. When Freemasonry was suppressed violent reactions were threatened. But none were forthcoming; just as they are not forthcoming now when we are conducting a very determined and increasingly intense anti-Semitic campaign directed by Farinacci, who enjoys considerable popularity in Italy, and who already has two organs of the Press in Rome—the *Tevere* and the *Quadrivio*—and a large number of followers, particularly in the university world.

They then go on to discuss the Spanish situation.

The Duce recapitulates the present state of our forces and declares that, unless there is some unforeseen development, he will send no more men to Spain since Franco, who has recently released the 1908 class, has no need of them. Our Volunteer Corps will again be used in Aragon in the forthcoming battle, which may be decisive.

<sup>1</sup>Wang Ching-wei, politician who favoured Japanese expansion in China. Expelled by Kuomintang, and from 30th March, 1938, head of the collaborationist Nanking Government.

## ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

Thereafter we are willing to begin evacuating the infantry, leaving in Spain, on the other hand, the specialists belonging to the Engineers, the Artillery, the Tanks and the Air Force. From now on Franco has victory within his grasp, and will speedily attain it, since it appears from accurate information and many other symptoms that the Reds are demoralised and resistance in the interior of Bolshevik Spain is reduced to the minimum. If, however, some new factor were to threaten Franco's position, and if the attainment of victory required a further effort, the Duce is willing to make it, even if it meant sending new regular forces. Meanwhile we are dealing effectively with the naval blockade, having handed over to Franco six submarines and four surface vessels.

England's attitude to Franco is worth considering at this stage. There is no doubt that London realises it has backed the losing horse, and is now trying to carry out a rapid change of attitude towards Nationalist Spain. Italy and Germany must be very much on their guard, because the problem is of particular interest to us from two points of view: financial and political. First of all, we have spent about four and a half milliards in Spain. German expenditure, according to what Goering said, is in the region of three and a half milliards. We wish to be paid and must be paid. But there is also over and above that a political aspect. We want Nationalist Spain, which has been saved by virtue of all manner of Italian and German aid, to remain closely associated with our manœuvres. On the other hand, the financial aspect of the problem is linked with the political one—only if Spain remains within our system will we be able to count on complete indemnification.

Rome and Berlin must therefore keep in close contact so as to act in such a way that Franco will always, and to an increasing degree, follow our policy. Franco has given proof of possessing qualities remarkable in a Spaniard. He is calm, discreet, a man of few words. Towards us he has maintained—particularly recently—an attitude of lively sympathy. However, there is no denying that he is already feeling certain negative influences, such as that of the great landowners and the upper clergy. Nor must one forget that the head of his diplomatic cabinet, Señor Sangroniz, has shown himself to be an Anglophile and of Liberal tendencies.

Ribbentrop would like to know our exact position in Majorca and what agreements there are concerning it.

The Duce replies that by concentrating the whole fleet at Palma Franco wished to give public proof of his sovereignty over the island. It is a fact that we have established at Palma a naval and an air base; we keep ships permanently stationed there, and have three airfields. We intend to remain in that situation as long as possible. In any case, Franco must come to understand that, even after our eventual evacuation, Majorca must remain an Italian base in the event of a war with France; that is to say, we intend to keep

## ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

all the installations ready there so as to be able in a few hours to bring the island of Majorca into effective play as one of our Mediterranean bases. If we use the base in Majorca, that in Pantelleria and others already in existence and equipped, not one negro will be able to cross from Africa to France by the Mediterranean route.

On the other hand, there are already fifty thousand men at present, and there will be twice as many in the future, holding down the French and English forces on the Libyan borders. One can foresee that the most important part of the next war will be played out in France. The English do not like land warfare and hate barracks. For this reason we must impose land warfare upon them. When the Home Fleet entered the Mediterranean, seven divisions were at once sent to Libya. It was thus certain that the Fleet would not act. This gesture of ours was considered a provocation by some; it was, on the contrary, a guarantee. It must be added that English land forces cannot survive long in Egypt, and in particular could not operate there. Those which were moved towards our frontiers on the occasion of the Abyssinian conflict, were very soon smitten by dysentery and had very heavy losses.

Turning to the attitude of Franco, the Duce affirms that he must necessarily remain attached to our political system, first because our pressure will prevent him from breaking away, and also because, his ideology being close to ours, he has taken a path from which he will not be able to retreat.

Franco will now give battle in Aragon. On this occasion, too, which may prove decisive, Franco can count on our support. Immediately afterwards we will make contact to define clearly his political relations with us. First, he must adhere to the anti-Communist Pact. Second, we will make a Tripartite Pact, whereby Franco will undertake to bring Spanish policy into line with that of the Rome-Berlin Axis.

Ribbentrop, who has lately had frequent contacts with Turkey, describes how Turkish circles are still anxious over the Italian attitude towards that State. He says that Turkey would be a good card in our game, and, in his opinion, it should still be possible to win it. He asks the Duce for an explanation of the present state of our relations with Turkey.

The Duce, after summarising the course of Italo-Turkish relations during the last few years, repeats that Turkey has not the slightest reason to be anxious over Italy and authorises Ribbentrop to inform responsible circles in Ankara that he is willing to give a further guarantee and renew the declaration that Italy has no anti-Turkish aims. A proof of this is given by the fact that we renewed the Treaty<sup>1</sup> when it lapsed. We might under certain circumstances

<sup>1</sup>The treaty of neutrality and conciliation between Italy and Turkey, signed in Rome on 30th May, 1928, was automatically renewed every five years, unless denounced after six months' notice had been given. (Article 6).

## ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

be willing to strengthen it.

Finally, Ribbentrop discusses the Austrian question.

After stating that he is speaking in a purely personal capacity, he points out to the Duce that in the grand policy of Rome and Berlin, Austria now represents an element of secondary importance, and that he considers that at a certain moment it will be necessary to settle finally a question on which the enemies of the common Italo-German policy still speculate. The Duce replies that Austria is a German country by race, language and culture. The Austrian question must not be considered as a problem affecting Italy and Germany, but, on the contrary, as a problem of an international order. For his part he has stated, and repeats it now, that he is tired of mounting guard over Austrian independence, especially if the Austrians no longer want their independence. The Duce sees the situation thus: Austria is German state No. 2. It will never be able to do anything without Germany, far less against Germany. Italian interest today is no longer as lively as it was some years ago, for one thing because of Italy's imperialist development, which was now concentrating her interest on the Mediterranean and the Colonies. It must be added that the fact that the Austrians have not modified in the slightest their cold and negative attitude towards us has contributed to the decrease of Italian interest in Austria. According to the Duce, the best method is to let events take their natural course. One must not aggravate the situation, so as to avoid crises of an international nature. On the other hand, France knows that if a crisis should arise in Austria, Italy would do nothing. This was said to Schuschnigg, too, on the occasion of the Venice conversation. We cannot impose independence upon Austria which, by the very fact that it was imposed, would cease to be independence. On the Austrian question, therefore, it is necessary to abide by the formula enunciated during the conversation with Goering in the Karinhall: nothing will be done without previous exchange of information.

The conversation, which began at 17.30, ended at 19.00.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 7th November, 1937—XVI*

I immediately sent for the Japanese Ambassador, to whom I expressed myself in accordance with the orders received from the Duce, and to whom I showed a copy of the telegram sent to our Ambassador, Auriti.

The Japanese Ambassador said that from the start Japanese reactions were against acceptance of the invitation. He repeated that the Tokyo Government was ready to begin conversations with China, but they must be direct and completely outside the frame-

## ITALY SIGNS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

work of the conference. He was sincerely moved by the proof of solidarity given him by the Duce on this occasion, and told me, that in his opinion the Tokyo Government will greatly welcome it if Italy takes steps similar to those indicated in the telegram to Auriti, which is attached.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 8th November, 1937—XVI*

This morning I received the Soviet Ambassador, M. Stein, who made the following statement to me: 'By order of my Government I inform you that the U.S.S.R. considers the terms of the Tripartite Pact between Italy, Germany and Japan, to be contrary to the pact of friendship, non-aggression and neutrality which exists between our two countries.<sup>1</sup> It further considers your adhesion to the anti-Bolshevik pact to be an unfriendly gesture towards Moscow. I have nothing further to say.'

I replied as follows: 'I note your statement and I shall inform the Duce. I, too, have nothing further to say.'

I then rose and accompanied him to the door.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRAZILIAN AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 8th November, 1937—XVI*

This morning I received the Brazilian Ambassador, who called to discuss with me the question of the supplying of submarines, a matter on which negotiations are already in progress with the Minister for the Navy.

In the course of the conversation, the Brazilian Ambassador was anxious to congratulate us on the conclusion of the anti-Communist Tripartite Pact and told me he hopes—and has already worked on his Government to this end—that Brazil, which is very interested in the fight against Bolshevism, may adhere to the Pact. Speaking personally, he asked me whether the adhesion of Brazil, the largest South American State, would be well received by the three signatories.

<sup>1</sup>The pact of friendship, non-aggression and neutrality between Italy and the U.S.S.R. had been drawn up in Rome on 2nd September, 1933. After the contracting parties had declared themselves in the preamble to be 'determined to continue their policy of complete abstention from any interference in their respective internal affairs', they laid down in Article 4 that 'each of the high contracting parties pledges itself not to enter into an agreement of a political or economic nature or into any grouping directed against one of them.'

## XIII

### MANOEUVRING FOR POSITION

8th November—13th December, 1937.

*In spite of the direct assurances received from Ciano on numerous occasions, the Hungarian Government watched the development of the international situation with growing anxiety. Not that Budapest was insensible to the attractions of 'revision'; but the collapse of Austrian independence was too much against Hungary's interests for her not to attempt to prevent it by all possible means. The new Italian policy, which had begun with the Rome-Berlin Axis, and continued with the Belgrade Agreements, was not calculated to allay Hungarian fears in the field of foreign policy; and there were too many rumours current of imminent German action against Vienna. Budapest, therefore, sought to bring about a new conference of the Rome group at the same time as it prepared for a visit to Berlin by Darányi and Kánya, fixed for 21st November.*

#### CONVERSATION WITH THE HUNGARIAN MINISTER.

Rome, 8th November, 1937—XVI

This morning I had a conversation with the Hungarian Minister, Villani, who, on Kánya's orders, wished to apologise for the behaviour of certain Hungarian papers towards us; at the same time he made it clear that there was no governmental responsibility in the matter since, so far, the Government itself lacks the means of restraining the Press, which is largely Jewish.

With the principal aim of stopping French and English insinuations concerning a decrease in solidarity in the group of States which signed the Rome protocols, Kánya proposes to announce as soon as possible one of the periodical meetings of the three Foreign Ministers, in view of the fact that the last took place in Vienna exactly a year ago. This time the meeting should take place in Budapest, but Kánya would be willing to come to Rome should that appear more convenient to us. He would suggest as a date for that meeting, to which he attaches much importance, next December or January.

I replied to Villani, reserving any final decision for the Duce, that I saw no objection in principle to the meeting, but that I did not, however, consider it possible to hold it in December in view of already existing commitments.

## MANOEUVRING FOR POSITION

Villani said that his Government would welcome an answer on this point as soon as possible.

*Stoyadinovitch, on the other hand, was also taking precautions in view of events whose consequences, he had shown in the other conversations, he clearly foresaw. The agreements with Italy must secure his western flank in the event of German expansion in Central Europe—an expansion which he coldly took for granted. The friendship and trust of Rome were also necessary to him in connection with the internal policy of his own country, where the two opposition groups of Serb Liberals and Croat autonomists, in Belgrade and Zagreb respectively, were working for the creation of a common front against the rule of the Yugoslav Radical Union of which Stoyadinovitch was exponent and director. Nevertheless, the head of the Yugoslav Government had not omitted to renew the treaty of alliance with France, and had gone to Paris for that very purpose. There, on 12th October, Chauteemps and Delbos had welcomed him warmly, and on the 13th the President of the Republic, Lebrun, had had a long conversation with him. The validity was thus reaffirmed of a diplomatic instrument which Fascist Italy, when it was signed on 11th November, 1927, had considered to be a hostile act. Nor did Stoyadinovitch stop here. He had gone as far as London on an official visit, had met Chamberlain and Eden, had let it be known that he did not underestimate contacts with the great democracies, without however committing himself too far. Thus he had turned down Delbos's invitation to adhere to a pact of mutual assistance to be drawn up between France and the three countries of the Little Entente, and when Delbos set out on a grand tour of the friendly capitals of Central and Eastern Europe—the French Foreign Minister arrived in Warsaw on 4th December and his programme included visits to Bucharest, Belgrade and Prague—his Yugoslav colleague decided to return Ciano's visit made in the previous March. Thus on 5th December, Stoyadinovitch arrived in Rome, where he was received by Mussolini and Ciano. He ostentatiously remained in Italy until the 9th and was just in time to take the train and hasten to Belgrade to receive Delbos, who was arriving from the Rumanian capital.*

### CONVERSATION WITH M. STOYADINOVITCH, YUGOSLAV PRIME MINISTER.

*Rome, 11th December, 1937—XVI*

During the conversations which took place in the Palazzo Venezia on 6th and 7th December, M. Stoyadinovitch began by stating that Yugoslavia intends to continue on the path laid down by the Belgrade Agreements of last March. Up to the present the results of the Pact have been excellent. More intense collaboration



in all fields will be possible in the future. Meanwhile Stoyadinovitch stated he was instructed by the Regent Paul to tell the Duce that in future, in any political circumstances, Yugoslavia will never be found in the camp hostile to Italy.

The Duce noted these declarations and, on his side, confirmed the intention of bringing about a progressive and continuous strengthening of the bonds of friendship between Italy and Yugoslavia.

*Spain:* M. Stoyadinovitch asks to be informed of the Duce's opinion on the Spanish situation. The Duce sketches the situation and concludes by saying that General Franco has, in the past, had definite proofs of Italian friendship and that that friendship will sustain him until the attainment of victory, which no longer appears in doubt.

M. Stoyadinovitch says he has followed our attitude to Spain with lively sympathy and informs us that Yugoslavia has decided to send a diplomatic agent to Salamanca. He adds that, on the other hand, since the outbreak of the revolution Yugoslav relations with Madrid have been practically non-existent.

*England and France:* M. Stoyadinovitch speaks of his recent journey to Paris and London. That journey produced no practical result. In London he gained from conversations with the most eminent politicians the conviction that England, while she is preparing to reconstruct her fleet and air force, will never be in a position to possess an army, in view of her strong objection to compulsory military service. That will place England in a position of inferiority. Stoyadinovitch noticed that there exists at present among the English the liveliest concern with regard to Italy. He recalls that during the Abyssinian war, the Military Attaché at Belgrade confided to him that the English fleet would not be able to act against Italy for fear of the so-called aerial death squadrons. The Duce explains the state of our relations with London and says, that, for his part, he is willing forthwith to agree with England on condition, however, that that agreement include all questions outstanding and be of a lasting nature.

As far as France is concerned, M. Stoyadinovitch does not conceal his deep dislike for the activities of the Popular Front. He points out, in particular, that there are numerous opposing trends which prevent any positive decision. The Army itself, by reason of its exclusively defensive nature, may one day face a profound material and psychological crisis.

France has lately urged that a pact of mutual assistance be formed between Paris and the three countries of the Little Entente. This is also the object of Delbos's present journey. Stoyadinovitch formally opposed such a pact and will offer firmer resistance to fresh pressure, which will be applied. An agreement of that nature, besides being unnatural and in practice impossible to fulfil, would

produce unbelievable absurdities and contradictions; one has only to think of the situation arising from the pacts which link bilaterally some of the States which would have to form part of that combination of powers.<sup>1</sup>

M. Stoyadinovitch informs us that France, which is concerned at his foreign policy, has in the past stirred up a strong opposition campaign against him. With the aid of the Regent he has overcome the crisis, and the hostile forces have been crushed. He will profit by this situation to expand the basis of his Government by the formation—which is already proceeding—of a large party which will have as its chief aim the organisation of Yugoslav youth. All that will produce an increasingly marked approach to the political system formed by the authoritarian countries and a break away from France.

*Hungary and Austria:* Relations between Yugoslavia and Hungary have markedly improved recently. M. Stoyadinovitch believes that, after the elections,<sup>2</sup> even Tatarescu will consider possible conversations with Hungary, with a view to reaching an understanding between Budapest and Bucharest. He is encouraging him to pursue this path because it would also render possible an understanding between Rumania and Italy. The Duce says that, in fact, relations between Rumania and Italy are cordial and that economic relations are being developed more and more. However, no formal agreement will take place without the consent of Budapest, to which Rome continues to be attached by close and cordial bonds.

When interrogated on the Austrian question, the Duce describes the situation and our point of view on the subject, as it results from conversations held with the rulers of the Reich on various occasions and with Schuschnigg in Venice last April. M. Stoyadinovitch fully agrees with our formulation of the question.

*Czechoslovakia:* Before he left for Rome, the Prague Government asked Stoyadinovitch to discover, in the course of his conversations, if there were any possibility of collaboration between Italy and Czechoslovakia which might serve to improve the latter's international situation. In informing us of the above, Stoyadinovitch adds that he himself perfectly understands Czechoslovakia's difficult position and that, in making the communication, he himself adds nothing in the way of recommendation or of pressure.

The Duce replies that Italy neither can nor wishes to intervene on behalf of Prague in any way. Czechoslovakia finds she must face

<sup>1</sup>An allusion to the joint declaration by Germany and Poland which had placed relations between the two countries on a new basis and inaugurated a policy of mutual friendship and collaboration.

<sup>2</sup>The Rumanian elections, held in 20th December, did not produce the expected results. The bloc of parties led by Tatarescu obtained only 38 per cent. of the votes; in consequence the Liberal Minister resigned on the 28th to give way to a nationalist and anti-Semitic cabinet led by Goga.

a most difficult situation which does not interest us directly, whereas it ranges against Czechoslovakia our German and Hungarian friends. Italy has therefore no alternative but to ignore any advance made by Prague.

*Balkan Entente:* M. Stoyadinovitch sketches his relations with Athens and Ankara. He also says that Rustu Aras asked him to inform Rome of Turkey's friendly sentiments, but personally he adds a severe criticism of the Turkish Foreign Minister.

The Duce reviews the course of our relations with Ankara and Athens in recent years. He says that we, on our side, intend to maintain a distinctly cordial note in our relations with these countries, but he must observe that, particularly after the signature of the Belgrade Pact, there has been apparent both in Greece and in Turkey, a more marked state of nervousness and a note of distrust not only towards Italy, but also towards Yugoslavia. That results from the fact that the Turks and Greeks now feel more strongly the Slavs' gravitational thrust towards the Bosphorus and the Ægean. Stoyadinovitch states that an impression such as the Duce's is corroborated by many proofs. Relations between Yugoslavia, on the one hand, and Greece and Turkey, on the other, although formally most correct, have recently altered as far as their sincerity is concerned. Stoyadinovitch adds that with regard to Greece and Turkey, too, he intends to bring his policy more and more into harmony with Rome's.

*League of Nations:* The Duce informs Stoyadinovitch that it is his intention to leave the League of Nations on 11th December.<sup>1</sup> He would have already made this gesture some days ago, had the Yugoslav Premier's visit to Rome not been in progress. If Stoyadinovitch believes that our withdrawal from the League of Nations immediately after his departure from Italy may give rise to polemics which would be harmful to him, the Duce is willing to delay the event for some days. The Yugoslav Prime Minister unconditionally approves the Duce's decision and says he will personally write the commentary on the event, to the effect that, with the departure of Italy from Geneva, the League of Nations ceases to have any use or power.

After an examination of points of minor importance, the desire for close collaboration in all fields is re-affirmed, and, with the aim of increasing trade between the two countries, it is decided to send a number of Yugoslav military and technical missions who will be able to gain a more detailed knowledge of our productive powers and make more direct contact with our armed forces.

<sup>1</sup>This did, in fact, take place on 11th December, by decision of the Fascist Grand Council. 'We are leaving without regret the tottering temple where they do not work for peace but prepare for war,' was Mussolini's comment made from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia. 'Italy's departure from the League of Nations is an event of historic importance, the consequences of which cannot be foreseen. It will take more than this to make us abandon our fundamental political directives which aim at collaboration and peace.'

## CONVERSATION WITH THE POLISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 13th December, 1937—XVI*

The Ambassador, Wysocki,<sup>1</sup> called to inform me, on the instructions of his Government, of the course and results of the conversations between Delbos and Beck.<sup>2</sup> He began by saying that the sole result of the visit of the French Foreign Minister had been to bring out more clearly the differences between France and Poland in their judgment of the international situation and the course to be adopted. Delbos showed himself to be particularly attached to the system of collective security and has faith in the activities of the League; he did not, however, put any pressure on Beck, who, on the other hand, reaffirmed Poland's faith in treaties and bilateral pacts.

The conversations also touched on relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia, but Beck gave Delbos to understand that the problem, in his opinion, was one to be dealt with directly by the two countries interested without the intervention of third Powers. As far as concerns relations between Poland and Russia, the Polish Foreign Minister said that, while not adhering to the Anti-Communist Pact, Poland does not intend to modify her relations with the Soviets—relations which are marked by reserve and coldness.

The colonial question was touched on incidentally only in the last stage of the conversations. No territorial claim was put forward. Beck confined himself to pointing out that, in the event of revision of the colonial problem, Poland intends to bring up her need for raw materials.

So much for his Government's communication. In a personal capacity the Polish Ambassador, who frequently wears the ribbon of the Legion of Honour and spends his holidays in France, added that Delbos, according to information he had from private sources, had left a good impression.

<sup>1</sup>Alfred Wysocki, appointed to the Polish Foreign Office in 1928, became later Secretary of State. Secretary to the Berlin Embassy from December, 1930 to 1933. In August, 1933 was nominated Ambassador to Rome.

<sup>2</sup>At the end of the conversations with the Foreign Minister Beck, with the President of the Council, General Skladkowski, and with Marshal Smigly-Rydz, an official *communiqué* was published which stated that 'all problems relating to Franco-Polish relations, and more generally, to the maintenance of peace in Europe' had been examined. It went on to say that the Franco-Polish alliance of 1921 continued to be 'an essential and permanent factor in the policy of the two countries.'



1938



## XIV

### CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS EDEN

3rd January—19th February, 1938.

*The aide-mémoire which Sir Eric Drummond, now Lord Perth, through his brother's death, had left with Ciano on 2nd October, 1937, as a summary of Anglo-Italian conversations, had had no effect. Mussolini did not intend to accept Eden's conditions. The British Foreign Secretary's refusal, in particular, to recognise the Italian Empire in Abyssinia was taken by the head of the Fascist Government as a personal affront, and once he was hurt in his amour propre he became almost incapable of reason. The British Prime Minister made, nevertheless, another attempt to break the ice. Speaking at the Lord Mayor's banquet on 9th November, Mr. Chamberlain said that it was the British Government's sincere desire to see relations with the two great Axis Powers 're-established on a basis of mutual friendship and understanding', and he added that such an understanding could have 'extremely important repercussions on the restoration of confidence and security in Europe.' He refrained, he said, from making any further statement because he thought that in the circumstances the goal would be more easily attained 'by private conversations than by public utterances'. There was an immediate retort in the *Informazione Diplomatica* on 10th November in the usual offensively supercilious style which Mussolini, the journalist, affected when he wrote anonymous articles in the *Popolo d'Italia*. 'In Roman circles,' it ran, 'it has been noted that Chamberlain has ceased to believe in or hope for a weakening of the Rome-Berlin Axis, therefore it would be useless and absurd to overlook this fact if one wishes to reach a settlement of the outstanding questions.' And after other observations on the scope of the Anti-Comintern Pact, which had occasioned 'long commentaries, sometimes inconsistent with one another, from circles in the so-called democracies', he ended on a decidedly petulant note. 'In Roman circles,' the note concluded, 'it is thought that one should not delay in holding conversations and reaching a conclusion through the normal diplomatic channels—a method which has always been preferred by the Fascist Government—otherwise one will be forced to believe that all this is being done to gain time, as a sort of anæsthetic. That is an error in judgment, since no-one will allow himself to be chloroformed or surprised.' Nevertheless contacts had not been broken off. On the contrary, little by little,*



## CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS EDEN

*between the end of November and the beginning of December some approaches had been made, and before Christmas the Fascist Government presented to the British Government a complete programme, suggesting how the agreement could be reached to which the 'gentlemen's agreement' of 2nd January, 1937, had been intended as a mere prelude.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 3rd January, 1938—XVI*

The British Ambassador called and told me that, following the conversation between Eden and Grandi on 2nd December and the communication made to the British Government by Crolla<sup>1</sup> on 23rd December, his Government is studying the situation. Since Crolla's communication spoke of a complete settlement of relations between Britain and Italy, including therefore the question of recognition of the Empire, the British Government, which had made no reference to that problem in the communication made by Drummond in October, must examine the question closely. Perth was instructed to tell me that the English delay in informing us of their point of view was due not to the fact that they wished to exclude that topic from any future conversations, but to the necessity of examining the possibility with care. I replied to Perth that I took note of the statement he had made to me, and practically repeated to him what Crolla had said to Eden concerning the advisability of having an agreement to settle the questions affecting Italy and Great Britain without leaving any obscure points or grounds for suspicion.

Perth told me that, for his part, he was entirely in favour of a comprehensive solution, but that, while awaiting further instructions from his Government, he was anxious to inform us that Britain's recent silence did not at all indicate a change of programme as far as the possibility of conversations with Italy was concerned, and that it is no part of Britain's intentions to make futile attempts to 'put them in cold storage'.

### CONVERSATION OF THE DUCE WITH COUNT BETHLEN.

*Rome, 5th January, 1938—XVI*

In a conversation with the Duce, Count Bethlen expressed his conviction that in the event of conflict between Italy and England, England would run a very serious risk in view of her inferiority in armaments.

<sup>1</sup> Guido Crolla, Counsellor at the Italian Embassy in London.

With regard to Austria, Bethlen said that 80 per cent. of the population is Nazi and the remainder is in favour of the *Anschluss*.<sup>1</sup> This increases the instinctive distrust of the Hungarians where Germany is concerned, particularly since the German attitude towards the German minorities in Hungary is far from sympathetic. The Hungarians fear that Goga's<sup>2</sup> advent to Power may constitute the beginning of a new Little Entente based on Berlin rather than on Paris. This is a matter which is causing the Magyars even greater concern, in view of the fact that Germany has made anti-revisionist statements against Hungary—statements which have not been denied. It is necessary to add that the German papers which appear in Transylvania are markedly anti-Magyar. The Hungarians, on the other hand, are by no means sure of Germany's revisionist attitude towards them or towards Czechoslovakia. Hungary's only political hope is Italy.

The Duce said that the agreement reached by Italy with Yugoslavia is very favourable to Hungary because it is clearly understood in Belgrade that we will not allow the Serbs to attack Hungary in defence of Czechoslovakia. That is in any case very improbable, since Stoyadinovitch is sceptical of the vitality of Czechoslovakia, which he himself described as a 'sausage state'.

Count Bethlen admitted that, of the three States of the Little Entente, Yugoslavia is the easiest to negotiate with.

The Duce confirmed to Bethlen that we will do nothing with Rumania without prior approval from Budapest—that is to say without a previous agreement between Rumania and Hungary on the treatment of minorities.

Bethlen considers that a protocol similar to that drawn up between Poland and Germany would be satisfactory. He would like, however, a declaration in favour of Hungary similar to that made by the Duce also to be made by Germany. As far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, Count Bethlen said that the Hungarians consider an agreement impossible, since they consider it to be a necessary condition that they should carry their frontiers to the Carpathians in order to make a junction with Poland and thus contain German pressure the better.

The Duce told Bethlen that any possible conflict between Italy and Great Britain would let loose German pressure in Central Europe and the whole Danubian balance of power would be thereby altered.

<sup>1</sup>The purpose of this statement, which Bethlen knew to be entirely untrue, can only have been to please Mussolini by providing him with another 'moral justification' for his *volte-face* on the Austrian question.

<sup>2</sup>Octavian Goga, Rumanian statesman of Transylvanian origin, man of letters and poet, holder of several ministerial offices, founder, together with Prof. Cuza, of the National Christian Party, which was violently nationalistic. Prime Minister from 28th December, 1937 to 10th February, 1938.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 8th January, 1938—XVI

The British Ambassador asked me whether Italy was contemplating the cession of Jubaland to Germany. If this were so, he drew attention to Article 5 of the Anglo-Italian Treaty of 1924.<sup>1</sup>

I replied that Italy was not contemplating the cession of any territory to any State. In the course of fifteen years of Fascist rule we had hoisted the flag over a great deal of territory. Nowhere had we lowered it.

*While the Anglo-Italian conversations were slow in getting under way, held up as they were by a divergence of views between Chamberlain and Eden, the situation in the Mediterranean was again becoming difficult. British ships had again suffered from torpedo attacks outside the territorial waters of Republican Spain. This time, however, agreement between Italy, France and Great Britain for a further increase in vigilance against the activity of pirate submarines was very rapid, and appeared a good augury for agreement between Rome and London. Indeed, the haste with which the Fascist Government had met the British proposals on that occasion, showed in an unequivocal manner Rome's desire to dispel any reason for distrust or suspicion as to her real aims in the Mediterranean. Agreement on the reinforcement of the control measures accepted at Nyon was reached on 4th February. On the same day Hitler reshuffled the chief posts in the regime so thoroughly as almost to give the impression of a coup d'état. In the diplomatic field, Ribbentrop succeeded Neurath, and von Papen was recalled from Vienna where he was the Fuehrer's Ambassador extraordinary. Within twenty-four hours von Papen left the Austrian capital to report to Hitler at Berchtesgaden. The same evening he returned to Vienna and had highly secret conversations with Schuschnigg, and less secret ones with Dr. Seyss-Inquart, who belonged to the 'Volkspolitische Referat' representing the Austrian Nazis, and with Guido Zernatto, the Secretary-General of the Fatherland Front. Hitler now insisted on a meeting with Schuschnigg which he had already proposed at the beginning of November, 1937, and again in December of that year. He also desired closer 'collaboration' between the Fatherland Front and the Austrian Nazis.*

*On the evening of 11th February, Schuschnigg and Schmidt secretly left Vienna; the next morning they were in Obersalzberg.*

<sup>1</sup>Article 5 of the Anglo-Italian convention of 15th July, 1924, concerning the cession of the territory beyond the Juba, stated: 'If the Italian Government should at any time desire to relinquish in whole or in part the territory transferred to it above, that Government undertakes to offer it to the British Government on similar terms.'

<sup>2</sup>In the event of a disagreement between the two Governments on the conditions of such a transfer, the question shall be made the subject of arbitration, in conformity with such procedure as the Council of the League of Nations may lay down.'

## CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS EDEN

*There they were awaited by the Fuehrer, with Ribbentrop, von Papen and three generals, including Keitel and Reichenau, in attendance. The discussion was long, dramatic and painful; it lasted until nightfall. Schuschnigg returned to Vienna overwhelmed and desperate. The drama of Austria was about to enter upon its last phase. On 15th February, at a meeting of the leading officials of the Fatherland Front, Schuschnigg revealed the German demands. To begin with Hitler had demanded a plebiscite, which Schuschnigg had refused; but he had been forced—almost literally—to accept a political programme which meant in practice the complete Nazi-fication of Austria, the reason being that (to quote his own words) 'I found myself internationally isolated, and because the Chancellor of the Reich had stated to me that in the event of refusal he would not be able to guarantee normal relations.'*

*The coup de grace to Austrian independence had been delivered in a brusque and unexpected manner. Even the Fascist Government had been surprised by it, and one might even say put into a panic. It was then that Ciano wrote a letter to the Ambassador to London, Grandi, instructing him to attempt to reach quickly a full and final agreement between Italy and Great Britain.*

### LETTER TO THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR TO LONDON, COUNT DINO GRANDI.

*Rome, 16th February, 1938—XVI*

Secret and Personal.

Dear Dino,

You will have gathered from my telegram of the 15th what the attitude is here to the understanding with London and what are the consequent intentions. I would have nothing to add if in the meantime something new had not arisen which—even if it does not alter the situation basically—still makes a discussion of tactics useful. The new fact is the Berchtesgaden meeting and what has followed it. The Nazification of Austria may now be considered—if not complete—certainly very far advanced. That was foreseen; just as it is now easy to foresee that there will be still further bounds forward in the Nazi offensive. When? That is the question which seems difficult to answer. And it is precisely in relation to this uncertainty that the present state of the Anglo-Italian negotiations must be considered. To use a phrase of the Duce's—which is as usual most effective—we find ourselves in the interval between the fourth and fifth acts of the Austrian affair. When will the fifth act begin? It is impossible to foresee. But it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the tempo may increase.

This interval, and this interval alone, can be used for the negotiations between us and London. Today any possible con-

## CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS EDEN

cessions and transactions take their place in the normal give and take of diplomacy and, if negotiations are begun, no one can talk in any way of pressure at the gates or of water about to close over our heads. But tomorrow, should the Anschluss be an accomplished fact, should Greater Germany by then press on our frontiers with the weight of its whole seventy million, then it would become increasingly difficult for us to reach an agreement or even talk with the English, since it would be impossible to prevent the entire world interpreting our policy of *rapprochement* with London as a journey to Canossa under German pressure.

Therefore it seems the time has come when one must speed up the conclusion of these *pourparlers* which up to now have proved static and therefore useless. One thing I must make plain: it is not that the Duce is any more anxious today than yesterday to grasp the English by the hand. As before he wishes an understanding if that is possible; as before, he is ready to face any trial, even the hardest, if that appears necessary. The conclusion of the *pourparlers* may therefore be either positive or negative. It is not for us alone to assume that responsibility; the English must take a corresponding share. But there must be a conclusion—and that quickly. For should still further delays be caused by the Chinese wall of prejudices and conditions, should the Nazi march into Austria in the meantime make its final advance and present us with a *fait accompli*, then there would exist no alternative and we would have to direct our policy in a spirit of sharp, open, immutable hostility towards the Western Powers.

I am telling you this for your guidance. I am certain that you will find a way of making the English understand, as and when you see fit, that if we wish to make an effort to bring our relations into port like a vessel in distress, then we must decide to do it soon, since time presses and we cannot always hold all the cards between us.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE PRINCE OF HESSE.

Rome, 18th February, XVI—1938

I have had a conversation with the Prince of Hesse<sup>1</sup> in connection with the Fuehrer's journey.<sup>2</sup>

He told me that Hitler, on learning the general outlines of the programme, expressed his complete approval. He added in confidence that the Fuehrer, once the official visit was over, might possibly wish to pass a few more days privately in Italy at the sea or in the mountains. We would be informed of any such decision in time so as to be able to arrange his stay which the Fuehrer up to

<sup>1</sup>Influential member of the Nazi party; husband of Princess Mafalda, daughter of King Victor Emmanuel III.

<sup>2</sup>The journey took place between 3rd and 9th May.

now has not mentioned to anyone, and the plan for which he asks us to treat as a matter of the strictest confidence.

We also discussed with the Prince of Hesse the situation which has arisen after the recent events in Austria. Since the Prince of Hesse will have the opportunity of seeing von Ribbentrop tomorrow evening (19th February), I thought it well to make the following three points to him in a personal and friendly manner.

1. Official Italian reaction to the meeting between Schuschnigg and Hitler and the consequences thereof is familiar to the German Government which will certainly have recognised in it a cordial and concrete proof of friendship.

The Prince of Hesse said that our attitude did, in fact, call forth lively approval in German circles.

2. Granted that, however, I had to point out to him frankly that the way in which things had occurred could not be considered by us to be altogether agreeable. In view of the close bonds between the two Axis countries, if one kept in mind the exemplary correctness of our policy towards Germany, and considered the verbal agreements which exist on the subject of Austria containing the pledge not to do anything without mutual consultations, we had every reason to believe that, before bringing about a meeting with such important consequences, the Fuehrer would have informed us in time and asked us to express our opinion. It was naturally advisable that my present remarks should be kept in mind by the German Government in future. I stressed that we had never failed to inform the Government of the Reich of even the smallest details of matters which were very far from having as much importance for the Germans as the Austrian problem has for Italy.

3. The impression produced throughout the world by recent events has undoubtedly been profound. However, for the purposes of the overall balance, it was still of the utmost importance how the Fuehrer expressed himself on the subject in his next speech. I hoped that in that speech the independence of Austria would be explicitly mentioned. We are all agreed in recognising that Germany has made an important step forward by enlarging her influence in Austria, nevertheless it would be well to declare that Austria continues to exist as an independent State, since the threat of a final absorption of Austria would produce reactions in world opinion which are at present neither easy to forecast nor prudent to arouse.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Almost at the end of his Reichstag speech on 20th February, Hitler said: 'In recent days a further agreement has been reached with that country which for various reasons is particularly close to us. It is not only that we are the same people, but above all it is a long common history, a common culture, which unite the Reich and German Austria. The difficulties which arose when attempting to bring about the agreements of 11th July obliged us to attempt to clear away for ever the misunderstandings and the obstacles to a final reconciliation. It was, in fact, clear that a situation which had become impossible might one day, wittingly or unwittingly, give rise to the pre-conditions for a very grave catastrophe. Sometimes it is not within human powers to succeed in curbing destiny when carelessness or imprudence have set it in motion. I

## CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS EDEN

The Prince of Hesse, who expressed very moderate opinions on the Austrian problem, said that he would not fail to make suitable mention of the matter to Ribbentrop. Personally, after having spoken with Goering, who was not yet completely informed of what had happened and who declared that it had been the Fuehrer who promoted and arranged the Berchtesgaden meeting, the Prince of Hesse considers that the Reich will halt on the present positions without—for a time at least—opening an offensive against Austria's now very limited independence. He fears, however, that the internal situation in Austria is liable to undergo new and serious developments.

### REPORT OF THE AMBASSADOR TO LONDON, COUNT GRANDI

N 1023/466.

Italian Embassy,  
London.  
19th February, 1938.

His Excellency  
The Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
Rome.

#### *My Meeting with Chamberlain.*

Further to my telegram of yesterday evening<sup>1</sup> I am dispatching this morning further details of my meeting yesterday with the Prime Minister.

In order to understand clearly the motives which led to this meeting and the course it took, it is above all necessary to bear in mind events in internal and international politics during the last two weeks. To be precise—

1. The sharpening of the differences between the two trends in the British Cabinet, the one in favour of an agreement with Italy (Chamberlain), the other against an agreement with Italy (Eden).

2. The reaction provoked in England by recent events in Austria.

It is against this political background that my meeting yesterday with Chamberlain is set, and this political background must be kept in mind when judging what happened at the meeting, what con-

am happy to be able to state that this opinion was also shared by the Austrian Chancellor who asked to pay me a visit. There therefore existed the idea of creating . . . a more far-reaching agreement between the two states by means of ever closer and more friendly collaboration . . . All this is a finishing touch to the agreements of 11th July. At this point I should like to express before the German people my sincere thanks to the Austrian Chancellor for the great understanding and the ready warmth with which he accepted my invitation and strove with me to find a way which is as much in the interests of both countries as it is in the interests of the whole German people whose sons we all are, whatever our birthplace. I believe that we have thereby made a contribution to European peace.'

<sup>1</sup>The telegram, which summarised the conversations, had been despatched at 1 a.m. on the morning of the 19th and reached Rome an hour later.

## CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS EDEN

clusions must be drawn from it, and the repercussions on the internal politics of Britain.

As I have told you in my telegram of the evening of the day before yesterday, on Wednesday 16th instant and again on Thursday 17th instant, Eden invited me to visit the Foreign Office, saying that he required to speak to me. I replied that I could not do so and added that it was preferable, in any case, to await new instructions for our conversation, which I was informed were already on the way to London.<sup>1</sup>

On Thursday 17th instant, Eden telephoned again, insisting on seeing me and talking to me that same morning. I put him off again, bringing up as a pure excuse that I had a golfing engagement (I hate golf but pretend to play it when necessary). I wanted Eden, in fact, to understand clearly that I did not wish to go to the Foreign Office, and confer with him at a time when international politics seemed to be dominated by news of the events in Austria, and when a visit by me to Eden on Wednesday or Thursday might easily have been exploited, directly or indirectly, by the Foreign Office in order to produce, in comment on it, the simple *canard* they are looking for about Anglo-Italian 'consultations', arising from events in Austria. That would have allowed Eden to escape from the position of obvious embarrassment in which he has found himself for three days in the Commons,<sup>2</sup> and would have cast a shadow on the Rome-Berlin Axis. These were Eden's obvious aims. And, precisely in consideration of this fact, I thought fit to react to his manoeuvre.

I have also informed Your Excellency that after my having refused, on the pretext mentioned above, to present myself at the Foreign Office, there came to see me on Thursday afternoon the confidential agent of Chamberlain, who, since the month of October last year, has been functioning as a direct and 'secret' link between myself and Chamberlain. This agent, with whom one may say I have been in almost daily contact since the 15th January, told

<sup>1</sup>In order to hasten the arrival of the special courier who was given the mission of carrying Ciano's letter of 16th February, Grandi arranged for 'a special air service' which, leaving Paris at dawn on 18th February, arrived in London in the early morning.

<sup>2</sup>The debate on Austria had begun on the 16th. When interrogated on the scope of the Berchtesgaden Agreement Eden had confined himself to giving the facts already known, and stated he would return to the subject later. Under persistent questioning from a number of Members he had been forced to admit that consultations had not yet taken place with the French and Italian Governments, who were signatories along with the British Government of the various declarations on Austrian independence. This statement had greatly disappointed the House. On the 17th and 18th Eden had continually put off the expected statement on Austria, saying that the information received by him through diplomatic channels did not add anything to the facts as known. The Government, Eden declared, had been given notice on 11th February by the Vienna Government of the Berchtesgaden meeting, but it had not been asked to express an opinion. In view of the fact that the guarantees of Austrian independence were collective ones, he said, the British Government did not wish to take the initiative, which depends on Italy and France, with whom conversations were in progress.



me he was instructed by Chamberlain to draw my attention to the fact that it would be opportune not to avoid the conversation requested by Eden, since 'it was very probable' (these are the exact words used) 'that the Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain, would himself take part in the conversation.' I sketched the reasons why I, for my part, considered I must avoid a meeting with Eden at the present time. I simply could not lend myself, I said, to anything which might possibly be exploited, in England or abroad, as a manoeuvre against the Rome-Berlin Axis, and against the solidarity of relations between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. If the Prime Minister thought fit to have personal contact with me, I was ready to present myself at Downing Street at any minute. The agent immediately consulted Chamberlain, and later in the evening, at 8 o'clock, there reached the Embassy, direct from the offices at 10, Downing Street, Chamberlain's telephoned invitation to present myself at 11.30 the following day for a conversation with the Prime Minister.

I have thought it best to set down the above, which is really necessary as a setting to the conversation.

Chamberlain received me very cordially, and began by saying that he had thought the Foreign Minister should also be present at this meeting.

I naturally answered that I was very pleased.

After the usual general introductory remarks which the English always make, exactly like the Turks and Chinese when they have something particularly important to say, Chamberlain went straight to the point with the following words: 'The situation in Europe and particularly the news of events in Austria during the last few days is very disturbing, don't you think?'

I replied to Chamberlain, very calmly, that the situation in Europe has been disturbing for a long time and not merely for a few days. I made no further remark.

Chamberlain remained silent a little as if waiting for me to say something more. Then he himself, seeing that I continued to maintain silence, broached the thorny question—Austria. He said that events in Austria, that is to say the news reaching London of the sudden German action to Nazify by force the Austrian State, had had in London the most serious and unpleasant repercussions. 'The German action against Austria,' Chamberlain continued, 'is evidently intended to produce changes in the European balance of power, and one must ask what remains today, and above all what will remain tomorrow, or in a short time, of Austrian independence. The latter still exists formally, but it is clear that if Germany continues, as she seems determined to do, on the course she has begun and speeds up the Nazification of Austria, Austrian independence will shortly be definitely and permanently compromised.'

Chamberlain went on to say that the Italian attitude to events in Austria was at present the subject of particular attention and

also of the most varied and contradictory inferences and interpretations. 'I myself,' he said, 'although I take a great deal into account, cannot understand this passive attitude on the part of Italy. I should be sincerely grateful to you if you could explain it to me and cast some light on it.'

I replied to Chamberlain that Italy's position was simple, clear and correct, in the Austrian question as in all others, and that I therefore considered it superfluous to proceed with an explanation such as he had requested. 'Moreover,' I continued, 'I have no instructions from my Government on this point, nor do I feel myself authorised to discuss this topic, which has no apparent connection with the projected Anglo-Italian conversations and is one on which I have no wish at all to open a discussion of that nature.'

Chamberlain then said that he had received a telegram from Lord Perth from Rome, in which the latter informed him of a short conversation with the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, during which the Minister had referred to a letter of instructions despatched to London to Ambassador Grandi. Lord Perth added that he had concluded from the remarks of the Italian Foreign Minister that, in this letter, reference was made to recent events in Austria. Chamberlain asked me whether, in fact, I had received such instructions, and if I could communicate their contents.

I replied to Chamberlain that I had, literally a few minutes before leaving for Downing Street, received a letter of instructions from my Minister, but I did not consider myself bound to make any formal communication to the British Government, and refused in any way to discuss the problem of Austria.

At this point Eden intervened, observing that after all Italy has never denounced the Stresa Agreement which provided for consultation between Italy, France and England on the Austrian problem.<sup>1</sup>

I answered Eden dryly that between Stresa and the events in Austria today there had intervened exactly three years, during which some events had taken place of considerable international importance; they themselves made clear and evident the reasons for the difference between the Italian attitude in April, 1935, and the Italian

<sup>1</sup>On 14th April, 1935, there had been signed by the representatives of Italy, France and Great Britain, a 'common declaration' which stated in paragraph 3: 'The representatives of the three countries have carried out a fresh examination of the Austrian situation. They confirm the declarations by Britain, France and Italy of 17th February and 27th September, 1934, whereby the three Governments recognised that the necessity of maintaining the independence and integrity of Austria will continue to inspire their common policy.' Referring to the Franco-Italian protocol of 7th January, 1935, and to the Anglo-French declarations of 3rd February, 1935, which confirmed the decision to consult on measures to be taken in the event of a threat to Austria, they agreed 'to recommend a meeting at an early date between all the Governments enumerated in the Rome protocols of 7th January, 1935 (they were in the first place Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and then France, Poland and Rumania) in order to conclude agreements relating to Central Europe.'

attitude in February, 1938, and that no one could understand that better than he, Eden, himself.

Chamberlain intervened in this, my first passage of arms with Eden, by saying that he took into account the changed situation and also my formal refusal to discuss with the British Government the Austrian problem. 'It is necessary, however,' Chamberlain continued, 'that I, as Prime Minister of Great Britain, in order to make a definite decision on what British policy towards Italy will be, and in order to be able to form an exact opinion of the prospects of future Anglo-Italian relations and the advantages or otherwise for England of an effective agreement with Italy, should at this moment have from you, in your capacity as Italian Ambassador to London, a precise and clear statement. The situation makes it necessary and urgent. Tomorrow will perhaps be too late. I do not ask you to discuss the Austrian problem. You have lately refused to do so, and I take into account the motives which lead to your refusal. But that does not mean to say that you cannot and do not wish to help me to understand the reasons for the present Italian attitude to the events of this week. The Italian attitude,' Chamberlain continued, 'has, as I have said, given rise to the most varied conjectures and interpretations. The British Government has been informed, for example, and the importance of the information is such that the British Government cannot neglect it' (at this point Chamberlain looked Eden in the face) 'of the existence of a secret agreement between the Fuehrer and the Duce whereby Italy is said to have given its assent in advance to German and Nazi intervention in the internal affairs of Austria and in the consequent progressive absorption of Austria, in exchange for definite and specific undertakings on the part of the Germans to support certain Italian designs in the Mediterranean and in Europe. I must know definitely from you what truth there is in all this.'

I replied to Chamberlain that the information given to the British Government was false.

In reply Chamberlain said that it might be that even I, as Ambassador in London, might not know all the particulars of the relations between Rome and Berlin; he was therefore constrained to ask me whether I made this outright denial in an absolute sense, from direct knowledge of the facts, or only 'as far as I knew'.

I answered that I denied in the most decisive and absolute manner, on the basis of the contents of those very communications transmitted to me by your Excellency this morning, any such information.

Chamberlain was visibly satisfied by my reply and glanced at Eden, who made no move. Chamberlain repeated the wording of my denial, saying that he wished to be certain that he had understood my statement accurately and literally. He went on to say that he noted my denial with satisfaction, and felt himself authorised on the

the basis of it to consider as false and tendentious the information which had reached the British Government. 'Nevertheless,' Chamberlain went on, 'there are some points and aspects which render Italy's attitude of ostentatious passivity in the face of the serious events in Austria in the last few days incomprehensible, and I require, always with the aim of defining English policy with a view to a possible definite clearing-up of Anglo-Italian relations, to inform myself fully of the reasons behind the Italian attitude and to inform myself of Italy's present position.'

I replied that I had no difficulty in doing this, all the more, I said, as it was merely a matter of repeating, listing in chronological order and showing how one followed the other as cause and effect, events which everybody knew.

I began by recalling the attitude of Fascist Italy to the Curtius-Schober project for an Austro-German Zollverein in 1931.<sup>1</sup> The good relations between Italy and Germany even at that period and Italo-German collaboration in the matter of disarmament, abolition of reparations and revision of treaties, did not prevent the Duce from making a decisive stand against that projected union between Germany and Austria, which was apparently economic, but in fact political. I then recalled the Duce's tenacious, constant, personal endeavour to bring to life, one after another, the various Austro-Italian protocols by which the Duce, with considerable economic and financial sacrifices, has nourished day by day Austrian centres of resistance to the German menace and given consciousness and strength to Austria's spineless sense of patriotism. All this—I added—in the face of systematic opposition, as far as the task of adjusting Austrian internal policy was concerned, from France and her allies who, blinded by petty anti-Fascist, anti-Italian envy, always sought to impede directly or indirectly the Duce's policy as applied in Austria—a policy which was obviously to the common advantage. France and her satellites have clearly shown themselves, particularly during the last few years, to be the most effective supporters of these very German aims. I recalled the open protection given by the Duce to Chancellor Dollfuss, his assassination under circumstances known to everyone, the Italian mobilisation on the Brenner in July, 1934, while France and England, busy chattering about the Austrian question but cautious in deeds, confined themselves to a verbal note as compared to the measures taken by Italy, whose example they took good care not to follow. All Europe knows that if the plot which began with the assassination of Dollfuss was foiled and Austrian independence saved at that time, that was entirely due to the Italian

<sup>1</sup>On 21st March, 1931, there had been signed by the German Foreign Minister Curtius and the Austrian Chancellor and Foreign Minister Schober an agreement which proposed a customs union between the two countries. This agreement was opposed by the League, and was declared contrary to Austria's international obligations by the Permanent Court of International Justice, whose opinion the League had asked.

divisions in arms on the Austrian frontier. Then there came, in April 1935, the Stresa Conference with its protocols and simultaneously the conflict between Italy and Abyssinia with all that followed, which was common knowledge. While England and France declared themselves, in the diplomatic protocols, ready together with Italy to guarantee Austrian independence, it was England and France themselves who promoted and put into operation those sanctions which have been a real war waged by 52 nations against Italy, the exclusive aim being to inflict, under the pretext of an economic war, nothing more nor less than a military and political defeat.'

'After the triumph of Italian arms in Africa and the victorious resistance of Italy to sanctions,' I continued, 'instead of immediately accepting this fact and seeking as far as possible to patch up the solidarity which existed at Stresa, England and France, have, under all sorts of pretexts, above all under the pretext of Italian intervention in Spain, shown with increasing evidence their determination to take political action 100 per cent hostile to Fascist Italy. What is happening today in Austria,' I concluded, 'is the direct consequence of English and French policy during the last three years. The Western powers have undoubtedly been the most effective supporters of the expansionist programme of Nazi Germany and bear the responsibility for what is happening in Austria. The explanation of the Italian attitude in the face of present events in Austria is not, therefore, to be sought in absurd plots between Rome and Berlin, but only in the policy of London and Paris.'

Chamberlain listened to me attentively and showed that he did not at all dislike this type of philippic, although it was condensed into a chronological list of facts and events, and when Eden was about to speak, Chamberlain intervened saying: 'This does not seem to me to be the moment to begin a discussion on responsibility. I might perhaps also say that I cannot share certain of your judgments. But let us examine the present situation. What is Italy's attitude at this moment and what will it be in the future not only to events in Austria but above all to the major European problems? To what extent must Austrian independence be considered compromised by the German action begun four days ago? Is it quite certain that this German operation, which aims at the complete absorption of Austria, cannot be stopped or at least slowed down?'

I replied to Chamberlain by saying that I did not intend to discuss the Austrian question with the British Government, and that he should confine himself to taking note of my complete denial of the existence of alleged contracts or agreements between Germany and Italy on the subject of Austria. 'But,' I continued, 'since you set me questions on the position of Italy in general European politics I am ready to expound the ideas of the Fascist Government on the basis of the instructions I received this morning from Rome.'

In fact, I believed that the moment had come in the conversation

with Chamberlain to do so, and on the basis of my instructions to put to the British Government, with force and clarity, the Italian position following recent events in Austria. My aim was to demonstrate the urgent need of reaching a rapid, all-embracing and definite agreement with Fascist Italy, an indispensable premise being recognition by Britain of the Italian Empire in Ethiopia. I told Chamberlain, in these very words, that the complete denial of the existence of a European agreement of a secret nature between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy referred to the present *but not to the future*. The future attitude of Italy to the general problem of peace in Europe and to the future European settlement depended exclusively, I said, on Britain's real attitude to Italy in the immediate future. Up to the present moment the attitude of Great Britain has been deliberately hostile to Italy. The entire Italian people is aware of this and convinced it is true; moreover, Britain's actions and initiative go to confirm it daily. Events in Austria this week have undoubtedly introduced an increased *tempo* into the European drama. No country can wait longer. Italy, for her part, can wait no more and demands to know immediately, and once for all, in deeds and not in words, if England intends to remain an enemy country or if it has decided to conclude a chapter in Anglo-Italian relations which has lasted for three years, and to come to an overall, conclusive agreement—an agreement without any obscurities or cause for future friction or differences with Fascist Italy. 'One must not believe,' I told Chamberlain—expressing myself in your Excellency's very words, since I could not have found any more effective—'that the Duce is more anxious to clasp England's hand than he was yesterday. As before he desires an understanding, if that is possible; as before he is ready to face any test, even the hardest. The conclusion of the *pourparlers* may therefore be positive or negative. It is not for Italy alone to assume such a responsibility; England, too, must take a corresponding share. I require that there should be a conclusion and that rapidly; since, should new delays again be caused, Italy would have no alternative and the Duce would definitely have to direct Italian policy in a spirit of frank, open, unshakable hostility towards the Western Powers.'

Chamberlain showed that he was listening to my remarks with still greater attention and said 'I wish to be sure that I have fully understood what you have been saying to me—that is, that if it should not be immediately possible to clear up finally the present state of Anglo-Italian relations, Italy would feel itself irrevocably forced in future to assume, once and for all, a political position and to give undertakings, which may turn out to be hostile to the great Western Powers.'

I replied that such was the case and that he had understood perfectly.

Chamberlain looked at Eden and resumed the conversation by

asking me what practical suggestions could, in my opinion, bring about positive results between England and Italy.

I replied: 'The immediate beginning of official conversations in Rome without further procrastinations and prejudicial conditions—whether these conditions be openly stated or disguised and then presented apparently in another form, but actually identical in substance.'

At this point Eden emerged from the hostile silence he had maintained up till now and intervened directly, in a sharp tone, in the discussion between myself and Chamberlain. Eden began by saying that this problem of the official opening of Anglo-Italian conversations had been, as the Prime Minister knew, the subject of several conversations during the past week between himself and the Italian Ambassador. 'Evidently,' Eden continued, 'between last week and today a new fact has emerged, and that is Austria, and above all the fact that the Italian Government, at least according to what Ambassador Grandi states, refuses to discuss the Austrian problem on the basis of the Stresa protocols. The Italian attitude,' Eden continued, 'at least until such time as it is further clarified, compels the British Government to go back over some of the points already covered in my conversations with Grandi during the last week. We must go back to the starting point and, before touching on any other problem, go thoroughly into the Austrian problem. Since the Anglo-Italian conversations must cover all the points of misunderstanding between the two countries, it is clear,' Eden continued, 'that the examination of the Austrian question must be given precedence over all others. Now Ambassador Grandi has declared that he refuses to discuss this problem. . . .'

At these words of Eden's Chamberlain gave visible signs of disappointment and irritation, but said nothing.

'After the Austrian problem,' Eden continued, 'there is the question of Spain. It is useless and dangerous—this must be said clearly—to pretend to ignore this problem, which is of fundamental importance to Anglo-Italian relations and prejudicial to them. What is the use of official conversations in Rome and London, if they are not preceded by a precise agreement and if a satisfactory solution of the Spanish question has not been reached? In January, 1937, an agreement was reached between England and Italy, which has shown itself in practice to be sterile and useless, solely because the Spanish question was merely touched upon in that agreement, and not discussed and settled so as to avoid the possibility of its constituting, in the future, the source of possible friction and disagreement between the two countries. To declare open official conversations between Rome and London without previous agreement on the Spanish question, means giving rise to dangerous illusions and exaggerated prospects of the course of the Anglo-Italian negotiations. This would cause a distinct deterioration in Anglo-Italian

relations, as already happened after the conclusion of the "gentlemen's agreement" of January, 1937. This is particularly likely if the Italian Government intends to insist on its prejudicial *sine qua non*—namely, that any Anglo-Italian agreement must include British recognition of Italian sovereignty in Ethiopia. To open official conversations after having declared on our side that we accept the Italian condition of recognition of Abyssinia, and without Italy giving any corresponding undertaking on Austria or Spain, means giving Italy all she asks without any corresponding guarantee on our part.<sup>1</sup>

At this point Eden dwelt on an absolutely arbitrary reconstruction of the course of the Spanish conflict this year: 'In January there was the signature of the "gentlemen's agreement" and some weeks later six thousand Italian volunteers were sent to Spain. In July after the exchange of letters between Chamberlain and Mussolini' and the agreement on the opening of the Anglo-Italian conversations we had the incidents in the Mediterranean, which once more gravely upset the atmosphere of Anglo-Italian relations. It is therefore above all necessary to create a situation which will guarantee that these "unfortunate coincidences"' (Eden's actual words) 'will not take place. Under present conditions and in present circumstances the British Government cannot come to any agreement with Italy, and particularly not to an agreement which recognises the right of Italian sovereignty over Abyssinia.'

I firmly replied to Eden that I could not but be disagreeably surprised by his words and added that I was ready to discuss the Spanish question with him, in the presence of Chamberlain, from top to bottom, in all its aspects, none being barred, and in all its phases and its entirely artificial repercussions on Anglo-Italian relations. But I thought it unnecessary to do so within the limits of today's conversation: I was, however, always prepared and ready to do so at any minute. I wished, however, to contest in the most formal manner certain of Eden's statements, which were contrary to the most elementary truths. To be precise, the letter from Ciano to Drummond accompanying the 'gentlemen's agreement' of the 2nd January covered the entire field, and answered implicitly all the possible questions and inquiries which might eventually arise in Anglo-Italian relations as a result of the Spanish conflict.

I recalled to Chamberlain (a thing worth while repeating, because the English like to forget it) that the Fascist Government before and after the 'gentlemen's agreement' had asked insistently and in vain on the Non-Intervention Committee for the application

<sup>1</sup>On 27th July, 1937, Chamberlain handed Grandi a handwritten letter addressed to Mussolini, in which he expressed his regret at the unsatisfactory state of Anglo-Italian relations, his faith in their improvement and the wish 'to enter into conversations to that end.' Mussolini replied on 2nd August with a handwritten letter addressed to Chamberlain accepting 'the proposal that conversations begin to ensure agreement' between the two countries.



of measures to prevent the influx of volunteers into Spain. To my denunciations of Russia, who was organising the Red anti-Fascist brigade at Madrid, and was causing Red volunteers to flow into Spain from all parts, the British delegate, Plymouth, answered in the Plenary Committee that the influx of foreign volunteers was not considered in the Non-Intervention Agreement. It was only after and in consequence of the influx of volunteers from Russia, France, England, Czechoslovakia, etc., and the formation of the Red International Brigade, which has proved to be far from negligible in efficiency—so much so as to halt Franco's victorious advance before Madrid—that the Legionaries left Italy, their only object being to counterbalance intervention which international anti-Fascism had already dangerously initiated in support of the Spanish Social-Communists.

I recalled to Eden his statements of 15th March, 1937, in the Commons, in which he declared that the British Government was informed that the volunteers on either side in Spain were 'equal in number.' If, therefore, the so-called 'spirit' of the 'gentlemen's agreement' of January, 1937, has been broken, the responsibility, I said, for the alleged breach lies not with Italy but with the Allies and associates of England herself, with the acts of sabotage which the British Government has always sought to further directly or indirectly.

'Such a situation,' I continued, 'arose in the month of August. At this point I quoted Eden's own words in the Commons' when he admitted the enormous influx of material and aid which, in the very months of July and August, had reached the Spanish Reds from Soviet Russia—a fact which naturally,' I continued, 'made necessary drastic and efficacious action by the Salamanca Government to hinder this serious contraband traffic.' There are, it is true, 'coincidences,' to use Eden's word, but these are not among the alleged contradictions in the Italian attitude; on the other hand, a strange and significant coincidence occurred whenever Anglo-Italian relations were moving towards positive improvement. There were first the moves towards an Anglo-Italian agreement, and then the moves made immediately afterwards by international anti-Fascism (including British anti-Fascism), which aimed at serious and scandalous intervention on the side of the Spanish Reds, and at simultaneously whipping-up an artificial campaign of lies against Italy, the only object being to destroy and wreck the attempts at agreements between Italy and England. Italy has the right to ask if many of the steps initiated during the Spanish conflict by the Governments in London, Paris and Moscow—for example, the Nyon Agreement—did not conceal a programme whose terms were laid down by a military action directly hostile to Italy, whose limits and proportions surpassed the limits and proportions of the Spanish

<sup>1</sup>Grandi is referring to statements made by Eden in the autumn of 1937.

conflict, and which recalled by a strange and symptomatic coincidence recent experiences at Geneva of the sanctions bloc against Italy.

'Fascist Italy, it is worth recalling, is today on the side of General Franco,' I went on, 'for the same reasons and in circumstances absolutely analogous to those which, a century ago, led England to send the Duke of Wellington and English troops to Spain to fight alongside the Spaniards against the French. Once Spain was liberated from the tyranny of the French invasion, the Duke of Wellington went off saying that he had safeguarded the interests of England through the mere fact of saving Spanish independence.'

Chamberlain intervened between Eden and myself saying that to him it appeared useless to continue with polemics of this nature, but that instead the most useful thing was for both sides to examine in a calm state of mind the possibilities of an effective and final clearing-up of the situation, seeking to remove the mutual difficulties in a spirit of mutual trust. Obviously the Spanish question could not be excluded *a priori* from an examination of the problems affecting Anglo-Italian relations. 'The Fascist Government,' said Chamberlain, turning to Eden, 'has never shown a desire to exclude the examination of any question which interests the two countries, and therefore had not excluded the examination of the Spanish question. Other questions will naturally have to be examined, for example—the situation as it affects both parties in the Mediterranean, the forces in Libya, the situation of both parties in the Red Sea, etc. What the Fascist Government is asking,' Chamberlain continued, still addressing Eden, 'is that we declare that England recognises Italian sovereignty in Ethiopia and that thereafter one should pass on to the examination of all the problems which must form the subject of the general agreement between the two countries, an agreement of which the recognition of Abyssinia must naturally form an integral part. I am in agreement and accept this. Italy further asks that no conditions or proviso should be made and that all the problems should be discussed together and on the same plane. I do not see how this can prejudice British interests and I do not see how the British Government can decline to accept the Italian point of view.'

Eden showed that he did not like these statements by Chamberlain in the least, and addressing the Prime Minister directly—as if I were not there—countered that he did not see how one could reconcile the simultaneous carrying on of Anglo-Italian conversations and the work of the Non-Intervention Committee. It was above all necessary, Eden continued, to wait until the Non-Intervention Committee had reached a definite agreement with definite undertakings by all the Governments taking part on the fundamental problem under discussion—that is on the withdrawal of foreign volunteers from Spain, but as a prerequisite of any agree-

ment it was necessary in the first place that the foreign volunteers should in fact have left Spain. 'Until that has happened,' Eden continued, 'I do not see what use there would be in official Anglo-Italian talks, which cannot but be influenced by the progress and the final outcome of the forthcoming discussions in the Non-Intervention Committee. On this matter no concrete proof of goodwill has been given on the Italian side. Italy continues to give evasive answers and makes no secret of it. For example,' Eden went on, 'ten days ago, I put before Signor Grandi a compromise formula on the question of volunteers and belligerency, and on other questions Plymouth has also spoken to the Italian Ambassador. We have been waiting for an answer for ten days. Is Signor Grandi in a position to acquaint us with the reply of the Fascist Government to the British formula?'

I answered Eden dryly by reminding him that three nights ago in Birmingham he declared that it was necessary to go slowly.<sup>1</sup> The Fascist Government had taken him at his word. The British formula is at the moment the subject of careful examination between Rome and Berlin.

At this point Chamberlain intervened, this time with the air of being thoroughly annoyed and said, turning to Eden: 'That is all very well, but one must not forget that between your conversations with Grandi and today there have been new events in Europe, and those new events instead of putting things back to where we started from should make us think again and lead us to the very opposite conclusions.' Then addressing me directly: 'I am asking a definite question—do you really consider that the fact of declaring publicly that the conversations foreseen in the letters exchanged between myself and the Duce might, as you say, in itself produce a favourable atmosphere, and in itself contribute to a rapid attainment of an agreement between the two countries?'

I replied to Chamberlain that I did think so.

Chamberlain went on: 'Very well. I think we might usefully continue our conversation this afternoon, thus allowing me to consult with my Foreign Minister on the matter we have discussed. If you agree, we can resume our conversation this afternoon at three o'clock.'

I agreed and with that our morning conversation came to an end.

At three in the afternoon the conversation was resumed.

Chamberlain began by telling me at once that he had examined

<sup>1</sup>On 12th February—not therefore 'three nights ago'—Eden had made a speech to the Junior Imperial League, in which he had said that in foreign policy Great Britain, while not abandoning the ideals of collaboration, of mutual assistance and international justice incorporated in the League of Nations, must at the same time give proofs of a spirit of tolerance and adaptability. One must take care, Eden had added, not to sacrifice principles and shed responsibilities with the sole object of obtaining results which were rapid but not lasting; at the same time, however, understanding between the democracies and dictatorships must not become impossible, in spite of differences.

the situation carefully with Mr. Eden and that he had come to the decision to accept my point of view, subject to the approval of the Cabinet, which he hoped to call for the next day, Saturday, so as to lay before his colleagues what had been discussed today between himself, the Italian Ambassador and Eden. 'The Cabinet,' Chamberlain continued, 'must be informed by me of the details of our discussions, and make its final decision. I will ask the Cabinet to be allowed to announce that the Anglo-Italian conversations have been officially begun without waiting for a previous solution of specific problems or other pre-conditions. In order to facilitate my attempt to obtain a unanimous decision by the Cabinet I nevertheless ask the Duce to see whether he can declare himself to be in agreement with the British formula<sup>1</sup> put forward by Plymouth and Eden on the specific subject under debate in the Non-Intervention Committee concerning belligerency and volunteers—bearing in mind,' Chamberlain continued, 'the possibility of a speedy and complete Anglo-Italian agreement for which a previous general understanding has already been reached between the two Governments on the fundamental points. We would,' Chamberlain went on, 'then proceed as follows: Official opening of the Anglo-Italian conversations to be simultaneous with a statement on the Italian side that the Fascist Government agrees with the British Government on the formula to be submitted later to the Non-Intervention Committee for discussion and approval.'

I asked Chamberlain to make it clear whether he meant by that that the conversations would begin immediately and without awaiting whatever might be the outcome of the British proposal in the Non-Intervention Committee.

Chamberlain replied that I had given an accurate interpretation.

I replied to Chamberlain that I did not yet know what the Duce and Your Excellency thought of the formula on volunteers and belligerency proposed by Plymouth and Eden in the course of our conversations last week, and that I could therefore give no definite commitment before having consulted Your Excellency and receiving instructions.

Chamberlain replied that he understood my difficulty and that, for his part, he wished before himself replying with a definite acceptance of this projected agreement to make clear to the Cabinet the reasons which had prompted him to make this decision and to have it approved. He therefore proposed that I should cable Rome so as to be in a position to give him a reply by Monday. He would reserve similar confirmation on his side until Monday—that is after the Cabinet meeting.

<sup>1</sup>On 14th July, 1937, the British Government had submitted to the approval of the Non-Intervention Committee a control scheme which under point 3 proposed recognition that both sides in Spain were juridically in a position which allowed them to exercise the rights of belligerents at sea, and under point 7, the withdrawal of volunteers.

## CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS EDEN

I assured Chamberlain that I naturally would not fail to place his proposal before Your Excellency in the terms indicated by him and that I would give him a reply by Monday in accordance with the instructions received from my Government. I thought it was well worth while—if only to give weight to a possible acceptance by Italy of the proposal for a compromise on the topic of volunteers and belligerency which was presented to us ten days ago by Plymouth and Eden—to make clear to Chamberlain in a personal capacity, the reasons why I considered that formula considerably to our disadvantage, since under certain circumstances, it could act with excessive discrimination to the advantage or harm of one of the two parties in Spain. I therefore expected that the Fascist Government would go cautiously before accepting the formula itself. For that very reason, I said, the Fascist Government has thought fit to undertake a careful and accurate examination of all the possibilities. The above-mentioned formula, I continued, means that the members of the Committee pledge themselves to accept in advance—by an automatic process—the results of the works of the two Commissions which have been sent to Spain. Now it is evident that on the Nationalist side, it will be easy to determine the number of volunteers since the foreign volunteers are easily identified in the legionary formations. The Red authorities in Barcelona, precisely with a view to a possible inquiry of an international nature, some time ago proceeded to dissolve the International Brigade, scattering its components through the various units of the Red Spanish militia. That will render the task of the Commission which is instructed to ascertain the number of foreign volunteers very difficult and complex—even admitting that one can presuppose absolute good faith—and might easily lead to errors. If the Commissions should discover a number of Red volunteers lower than the number of volunteers on the Nationalist side, a relatively small difference in the calculation could, in certain circumstances, work out unjustly and unfairly as far as Franco was concerned and have an effect which went beyond even the clauses contemplated by the British plan of 16th July<sup>1</sup> and by the Resolution of the Non-Intervention Committee of 4th November.<sup>2</sup>

It was necessary—I continued—for me to point all this out to Chamberlain in order to avoid from now on responsibility for possible difficulties in the future, and also because the blame must not be put on Italy later if such difficulties arise through the fault

<sup>1</sup>The plan bears the date of 14th July. It was presented to the Committee on 16th July.

<sup>2</sup>On 4th November the Non-Intervention Committee had approved two resolutions: the first authorised the President of the Committee to enter into contact with both sides in Spain in order to obtain their agreement to co-operation in the withdrawal of all foreign volunteers under international control; the second referred to steps to be taken to get round the consequences of the Soviet Union's refusal to recognise Franco as a belligerent.

of a third power. It is all the more necessary to repeat this, I concluded, in view of the tendency clearly demonstrated by Mr. Eden to consider that the collective results of the Committee of Non-Intervention are capable of modifying the Anglo-Italian negotiations either positively or negatively. Which means in practice—I repeated—either that one recognises beforehand that third powers can at any moment compromise the results of the Anglo-Italian negotiations, or else that one admits an even more absurd hypothesis, which is that in order to reach an agreement with Britain, Italy might find herself compelled to accept all the conditions which Russia and France saw fit to make and to put forward in the Non-Intervention Committee, even if they had no other aim than to engineer a breakdown of the Anglo-Italian negotiations either before they started or when they were in progress.

Chamberlain listened to me and said that it was rather difficult for him to follow in detail the complicated and abstruse formulæ which emerged one after another from the hair-splitting debates in the Non-Intervention Committee, but that in any case he estimated at its just value the general sense of what I had told him, and was certain—he concluded (looking at Eden and turning towards him with a slightly bantering air)—that the Foreign Minister did the same.

'It is now necessary,' Chamberlain continued, 'for us to agree on the spot where the official negotiations, which must naturally be as speedy as possible, will take place.'

I replied that I did not see how there could be any doubt on that subject. The official negotiations must take place in Rome.

Chamberlain replied that he was puzzled at the choice of Rome. He sincerely preferred—Chamberlain said—that these conversations should continue here in London where they had in fact already begun in the course of the week at the Foreign Office, and had continued today at Downing Street. 'Even if it is agreed to call them preliminary and exploratory,' Chamberlain continued, 'there is no doubt that from many points of view we have already got to the heart and substance of the problems under discussion. On the subject of British recognition of Italian sovereignty in Abyssinia, there is nothing further to be discussed. I confirm to you today that the British Government no longer insists on the objection communicated previously to the Italian Government in the months of September, October and December of last year—which means to say that British recognition of Italian sovereignty in Abyssinia must be an integral part of the future Anglo-Italian Agreement. On the question of anti-British propaganda, too, the British Government has withdrawn its statement that it considers a solution of this question a condition, and accepts the Italian point of view that incidents on either side which may disturb the friendly atmosphere between the two countries should be examined during the general

negotiations. Mr. Eden has informed me, moreover, that on this point discussions were already begun during last week's conversations. There remain other questions of undoubted importance which have not been touched on, and all of them could be discussed here in London. I myself might possibly be able to take part personally with a view to hastening the issue of the conversations should difficulties arise.'

Eden intervened to state that, for his part, he considered it absolutely necessary that the official conversations—if (Eden stressed) *they do actually take place and when they take place*—should in any event be held in London. Eden added that the choice of London as meeting-place appeared all the more natural since it is in London that the discussions of the Non-Intervention Committee are held and will continue to be held, and it was evident that any Anglo-Italian conversations *which might take place* would have to keep in step with the work of the Non-Intervention Committee.

I replied that I appreciated the reasons for which the Prime Minister considered London preferable as the meeting-place, but that I could not, on the other hand, accept the reasons which led the Foreign Minister to consider it necessary to choose London and not Rome. What Eden had said, I continued, had made me all the more convinced of the advisability if not of the necessity of holding the negotiations in Rome, as had been expected since July of last year. For the very reason, I said, that London is the scene of the labours of the Non-Intervention Committee it is advisable that the negotiations should be conducted in Rome, that is to say apart from and independently of the work of the Non-Intervention Committee. I cannot accept, I said, the arguments put forward this morning by Mr. Eden, according to which the outcome of the Anglo-Italian negotiations should be contingent upon the collective results of the Non-Intervention Committee. That would mean, I repeat, to give Russia and France, for instance, the right to wreck the Anglo-Italian negotiations at any minute by means of an action of sabotage or by means of manœuvres in the London Committee, which are only too easy. The Fascist Government is willing to discuss any subject which may affect Anglo-Italian relations directly, but it is clear that it cannot allow its attitude and goodwill to be dependent on or subordinate to the ill-will of third powers which are notoriously hostile to Italy, and which are obviously interested in opposing any agreement between England and Italy. That would mean, in other words, making Russia and France arbiters in the Anglo-Italian conversations; which is absurd. If this is what Mr. Eden wants, it is as well to clear up this point explicitly and before going any further. And if this were the case, I should have to draw the conclusion that the British Government has no serious intention of reaching positive results. What I am saying applies, moreover, not only to the connection which is asserted to exist between the Anglo-Italian

conversations and the work of the Non-Intervention Committee, but also and above all to any Anglo-Italian discussions on the Spanish question which may at any time take place. The claim that merely in order to create conditions favourable for an agreement with England Italy should modify her policy of support for General Franco, or cease to counterbalance the scandalous intervention by Russia and France, would mean, in other words, that the British Government is not looking for the basis of a definitive agreement with Italy, but is merely attempting to immobilise Italy, to favour French and Russian intervention and to aid the Spanish Reds in a decisive manner. Especially of late, I continued, French intervention has assumed such scandalous proportions as to make Italy's position once more really difficult in so far as her aid to Nationalist Spain is concerned—aid which is both necessary and her bounden duty. I do not believe—I continued—that the Fascist Government can remain silent much longer on the subject of this continual intensification of French intervention in Spain.

Chamberlain replied that as far as either the question of volunteers or of all the other questions connected with non-intervention are concerned, it is obvious that the British Government always intends to apply an accurate standard of reciprocity to both sides, without discrimination of any kind between Salamanca and Barcelona. As regards the question of volunteers more specifically Chamberlain added: *'When I say foreign volunteers I mean the volunteers on both sides.'*

At this point, after this necessary digression, we returned to the question of the place in which the Anglo-Italian discussions will take place.

I once more insisted on Rome, showing by obvious arguments, and several times over, the necessity of conducting these negotiations in the Italian capital. There is a definite agreement between the British and Italian Governments, which is familiar to everybody, and there is no doubt that the Italian public would be very puzzled to learn at the last moment, and for reasons which cannot readily be explained, that this agreement has been modified. That would incur the risk of immediately creating an atmosphere unfavourable to these conversations.

Eden intervened to say that one could not speak of an agreement in the true sense of the word between the British and Italian Government on a meeting in Rome; it had been spoken of as a possibility, but he did not believe that there was an agreement in the true sense of the word.

Chamberlain, a little embarrassed, said that he did not in fact remember whether this subject had been discussed during the conversations with me in July.

I replied that it had been discussed and that Chamberlain had then consented to the conversations, which then seemed imminent.



## CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS EDEN

taking place in Rome. 'Moreover,' I added, 'I am in a position to produce documentary evidence to that effect.'

At this point I produced two documents<sup>1</sup> which I had brought with me in case they might be useful. In both documents the British Government confirms that the seat of the forthcoming conversations is to be Rome and not London.

Chamberlain examined these documents and then said to me that it would be possible to find a middle way—that is to say, to continue the conversations already begun in London with the proviso that during their course the advisability of transferring them to Rome be examined. Or, continued Chamberlain, the British Government could address an invitation to Count Ciano to visit London and he could on that occasion himself finish the conversations and sign the agreement.

I replied that Count Ciano would without doubt have appreciated the invitation from the British Prime Minister and that, in favourable circumstances, I was sure that he would have been glad to accept that invitation. But, in present circumstances, all factors made it preferable not to alter anything in the programme already fixed; that meant that the conversations anticipated in the exchange of letters between Chamberlain and Mussolini be carried on in Rome, in accordance with the agreement personally reached between Chamberlain and myself during our meeting in July last.

At this point, as at the end of the morning's discussion, Chamberlain addressed the following question directly to me: 'You really believe, then, that the fact that these negotiations are carried on in Rome, may favourably influence their results?'

I replied that there was no doubt that this was so.

Chamberlain finished by saying that he agreed to Rome, and the conversation then finished.

I have made and hasten to send to Your Excellency this faithful and detailed photographic record of these two conversations, which lasted three hours in all, because I consider that no impressions and no commentary could reproduce the various aspects of the political situation in these days better or more efficiently than the documentary picture of my meeting with Chamberlain and Eden, giving its chronological development, its successive stages and phases, the questions and answers, the arguments and clashes between Chamberlain, Eden and the undersigned.

Certainly this discussion of yesterday was one of the most paradoxical and extraordinary in which it has been my lot to take part.

Chamberlain and Eden were not a Prime Minister and a Foreign Minister discussing with the Ambassador of a Foreign Power a delicate situation of an international character. They were—and

<sup>1</sup>The *aide-mémoire* dated 6th August, 1937, handed to Count Ciano by Sir Eric Drummond, and the record of a later conversation between the British Chargé d'affaires in Rome and Count Ciano on 27th September, 1937.

revealed themselves as such to me in defiance of all established convention—two enemies confronting each other, like two cocks in true fighting posture. The questions and queries addressed to me by Chamberlain were all, without exception, intentionally put with the aim of producing replies which would have the effect of contradicting and overthrowing the bases of argument on which Eden had evidently previously constructed, or by which he had attempted to justify, his miserable anti-Italian and anti-Fascist policy in opposition to Chamberlain and before his colleagues in the Cabinet.

Eden, for his part, did not scruple to reveal himself fully in my presence as what he has always been and what I have always described him as: an inveterate enemy of Fascism and of Italy.

At the end of these three hours conversations the two men whom I had had in front of me gave the indelible impression that, behind the words, the arguments, the differences of opinion and even the questions under discussion, they were playing, or preparing to play for the high stakes of their future destiny in the Government and in the Conservative Party, and that they were forging their debating weapons for the Cabinet meeting which is taking place at the very moment when I am writing this report, a meeting which for them may be a decisive battle.

Chamberlain, in fact, in addressing his questions directly to me, expected from me—this was obvious—nothing more nor less than those details and definite answers which were useful to him as ammunition against Eden. This I at once realised and naturally tried to supply Chamberlain with all the ammunition which I considered might be useful to him to this end. There is no doubt that in this connection the contacts previously established between myself and Chamberlain through his confidential agent proved to be very valuable. Purely as a matter of historical interest, I inform Your Excellency that yesterday evening after the Downing Street meeting, Chamberlain secretly sent his agent to me (we made an appointment in an ordinary public taxi) to say that he 'sent me cordial greetings, that he had appreciated my statements, which had been very useful to him, and that he was confident that everything would go very well next day.'

I would not wish either to leave Your Excellency the impression which some statements made by Chamberlain in the course of the discussion suggest—namely that Chamberlain has in mind any plan for resisting Germany over the Austrian question. The British attitude to events in Austria has been and, I believe, will remain that which I have always reported to Your Excellency—that is to say, an attitude of what I shall call 'indignant resignation.' To the question of Anglo-German relations in consequence of events in Austria I will return later in a separate paper.

In any case it is not Germany or Austria which is the battleground between Chamberlain and Eden at present. It is Italy alone.

## CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS EDEN

Chamberlain wants to put finished to the chapter on Abyssinia, to recognise the Italian Empire and to conclude with Mussolini's Italy a lasting agreement based on respect and mutual friendship. Eden wishes to continue with his policy of hate and vendettas, to pave the way for war with Italy at some date sooner or later, and to pose—as he is now doing—as a sort of new Pitt facing the Napoleon of Italy.

To say that Chamberlain will have an easy task would be inexact. Eden has on his side the man in the street, or the 'historical beast' which is always lurking in a large section of the British people, the Left-wing parties, French anti-Fascism and Masonry, who see in him the head of the future British Popular Front.

All through today, Saturday 19th, the political atmosphere in London and in the House of Commons is the same as in the days preceding the Hoare-Laval crisis of December, 1935.<sup>1</sup>

Today, in February, 1938, it is over *the subject of Italy and of policy towards Italy alone* that parties and opinions are excited and divided exactly as they were then, in December, 1935.

Churchill, who is a personal enemy of Chamberlain, is this morning once again gathering together the Left-wing Conservative members in order to declare his solidarity with Eden and to attempt to instigate a 'pronunciamento' in the Commons in favour of the latter.

Let us hope that Churchill's solidarity will bring Eden the same good fortune as it did to the ex-King Edward VIII during the abdication days. Chamberlain, for his part, has mobilised and is mobilising the City, the Right-wing and Centre members and all the political forces at his disposal. One certainly cannot say that the situation this morning is lacking in real interest and in dramatic qualities. But old Chamberlain, there is no doubt about it, has shown that he has a tough hide like his cobbler forefathers in Birmingham. Let us hope that this time our luck is in.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 19th February, 1938—XVI

The Ambassador, Lord Perth, told me that he had not yet had any instructions on the subject of the proposed Anglo-Italian conversations, but that he had instead urgently to call the attention of the Fascist Government to the question of two Italian military posts which had been set up some months ago on territory belonging to Kenya and to the Sudan, and of which the British Government

<sup>1</sup>The British Foreign Minister, Sir Samuel Hoare (now Lord Templewood), and the French Foreign Minister, Pierre Laval, had drawn up a joint plan to solve the crisis between Italy and Abyssinia. This plan was made public prematurely, and produced strong reactions in Britain and France, which compelled the Prime Minister, Baldwin, to replace Hoare by Eden. The plan was naturally dropped.

requested 'the immediate withdrawal.' He left a note on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

I told the Ambassador that I shall collect the material on the matter. On my remarking to him incidentally that it seemed to me that too much importance was being attached to the subject, the Ambassador *told me that he, too, would have confined himself to transmitting the request to the Italian Foreign Office had he not received direct and personal instructions from the Secretary of State to present the protest personally and to use the formula he had adopted.*

I believe this is worth reporting since it may have great significance, having taken place the day after the conversation between Grandi, Chamberlain and Eden.

Before withdrawing the British Ambassador asked me if I had had any information on yesterday's talks and on the probable date for the opening of the conversations. I told him very briefly what Grandi had reported to us. Lord Perth again stated his desire to be able to begin the negotiations soon, a desire which recently he has always repeated to me with warmth.

<sup>1</sup>In the Note, which was marked 'Immediate', the British Government drew the attention of the Italian Government to the two following facts: (a) an Italian military post had recently been set up at Kangalimoru, 25 miles within Sudanese territory; (b) another Italian post had been discovered by British frontier guards north of Kokoi, near the east bank of Lake Rudolf, some 25 miles within Kenya territory. In consequence the British Government made 'formal protest' against the unauthorised occupation of these points and asked for 'the immediate withdrawal of the posts at Kangalimoru and Kokoi'.

## XV

### CHAMBERLAIN TRIES AGAIN

22nd February—26th March, 1938.

*Immediately after the conversations with Grandi, the struggle between Eden and Chamberlain flared up again. Chamberlain had on his side the great majority of the Ministers, Eden was practically alone. Nevertheless the Prime Minister made an effort to preserve the unity of the Cabinet. He was anxious to avoid differences of opinion with his Foreign Minister from having spectacular consequences, which would also inevitably have their effect in international affairs. But all efforts were in vain. On Sunday, 20th February, the Cabinet met three times. Not even during the period which preceded Britain's entry into the war at the beginning of August, 1914, had the Cabinet met on a Sunday. There was a great crowd outside Downing Street, excited and restive. Leaflets were being circulated bearing the slogans 'No Agreement with Dictators', 'Send Arms to Spain'. When Eden left the second Cabinet meeting to return to the Foreign Office for the last time he was pale and serious. The crowd guessed that he had handed in his resignation, but it was not until 10.25 in the evening that Eden announced it to the journalists, adding that Chamberlain had accepted it. That day Mussolini was at Terminillo, in the Abruzzi, for the winter sports. He received the news which had been despatched urgently to him from the Palazzo Chigi at five past eleven. He could go to bed satisfied; his most determined personal enemy had been put in a position where he could not harm him—at least for some time.*

*The way was thus paved for the rapid development of the conversations between Rome and London. The new British Foreign Minister, Lord Halifax, shared the convictions, the hopes and illusions of Chamberlain. This was indeed, as Grandi had written on 19th February, a lucky time for Italy—or so it seemed.*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 22nd February, 1938—XVI

I received the Ambassador, Lord Perth, who, on the eve of his departure for London, whither he has been recalled to receive instructions for the forthcoming opening of the Anglo-Italian conversations, wished to make direct contact with me to express his

## CHAMBERLAIN TRIES AGAIN

satisfaction at the situation which has arisen and which he has long desired.

He asked me in a purely personal and exploratory manner whether I had any suggestions to make on the agenda of the forthcoming conversations. He, for his part, considered that subjects of discussion should be those with which we are already familiar. I replied that I agreed with him. The same subjects as had been discussed at the time of the 'gentlemen's agreement' could be the subject of examination with the exception of some which had in the meantime lapsed, such as the problem of the Balearics, and others, such as the problem of Spain, which had been transferred to another body. Naturally, on the Italian side, the question of legal recognition of the Empire was being added.

Lord Perth expressed himself in agreement and reserved the right to add any topics which might be suggested by London, such as, for example, military reinforcements in Libya.

At the end of the discussions, Lord Perth foresees that the best method of giving concrete form to the agreement would be to draw up a memorandum, similar to that signed in Berlin by Neurath and myself. I, too, declared myself in principle in favour of a document of this sort.

Lord Perth, who leaves for London this evening, expects to return on Tuesday or Wednesday of next week, and wishes to open the conversations immediately on the basis of the instructions received from his Government.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 8th March, 1938—XVI*

Lord Perth began the conversation by stating that he was authorised by the British Government to open the conversations with the aim of reaching an agreement between his country and Italy, and added that he was happy to deliver to me a personal message from Lord Halifax.<sup>1</sup>

I thanked him for the message and assured him that I would not omit to convey a reply to the British Foreign Minister at the earliest possible moment.

Continuing the preliminary conversation, Lord Perth was anxious to repeat, in the name of his Foreign Minister, that no particular

<sup>1</sup>The message dated 3rd March addressed to 'My dear Count Ciano,' took advantage of Lord Perth's return to Rome to convey to Count Ciano, through the Ambassador, a personal word of greeting. Lord Halifax said he was led to do so not only because he had just assumed the post of His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs but because the moment coincided with the opening of conversations which, he trusted with all sincerity, would lead to the rebirth of that old friendship between the two countries—a friendship which, he maintained, had been until recent times the cardinal factor in the policy of them both.

importance ought to be attached to the interview granted to the Negus. The British Government cannot, in the present situation, avoid having contacts with the representatives of the former Abyssinian Empire, nor could it refuse a request for an audience from the Negus.<sup>1</sup> We will certainly have noticed that the Press passed over this event in silence.

I replied by stating that I noted his statement, but added that I was not, for my part, altogether in agreement with the opinion that the Negus's request for an audience had to be accepted. However, I stressed that the Italian Press, too, had, in accordance with the desire expressed by the British Government, abstained from any polemics on the subject, although the event had not escaped general notice and, particularly in France, had called forth comments which were both absurd and displeasing.

Lord Perth spoke to me about the propaganda carried on by the Press and asked that during the course of the negotiations propaganda activity on our side should be limited. Halifax, for his part, has already addressed an appeal to the British Press, with the exception naturally of the opposition one, to avoid anti-Italian campaigns. I pointed out to Lord Perth that for some weeks past the tone of our Press has been substantially modified and the radio, too, is following a policy which cannot give rise to any trouble.

Perth said that a change in tone towards France, too, until the end of the negotiations which were to follow, would be useful. This was, however, to be considered as a personal suggestion. I replied that the polemics between ourselves and France are due rather to ideological reasons in view of the character of the French Government—that obviously makes a change in our attitude more difficult. As far as international problems are concerned, with the exception of the Spanish one, there are no grounds for serious contention between Italy and France. Continuing with the preliminary conversation, Lord Perth said that the problem to which British public opinion attaches the most importance is that of the evacuation of volunteers from Spain. It would therefore be necessary to achieve concrete progress on this subject as soon as possible. He suggested in a personal capacity the possibility of evacuating our forces from the Balearic Islands, in view of the fact that, in his opinion, a gesture of the kind would be certain to arouse a most widespread and favourable response among the British public. I replied that this

<sup>1</sup>The Negus, alarmed by the possibility that Britain might recognise the Italian Empire in Abyssinia, had asked to be received by Lord Halifax, and his request had been granted. On 2nd March the British Embassy in Rome was instructed to bring immediately to the notice of the Italian Government that it was customary for a newly appointed Foreign Secretary to receive all the heads of Missions accredited to the Court of St. James's. The Foreign Secretary could not guarantee that the British Press would not come to learn of these interviews, but he was confident that the Italian Government would appreciate his difficulties, and that the Italian Press would refrain from commenting on the matter in a tone which might prejudice the result of the forthcoming important conversations between London and Rome.

suggestion appeared strange to me, since, as is well known, we have no land forces in the Balearics and that, at least up to now, the discussions of the Non-Intervention Committee have dealt only with land forces. At all events it appeared to me that such a proposal could not be considered. Lord Perth did not insist. Continuing the preliminary conversation, he repeated that the British Government is anxious to give any agreement reached between the two countries the character of a gesture destined to facilitate the general pacification of Europe. I replied that we too shared this point of view.

Lord Perth then handed to me the agenda for the Anglo-Italian conversations. When accepting it I drew his attention to the fact that I reserved the right to add any subjects which the Duce might order me to discuss.

We then proceeded to an examination of the eleven points which constitute the agenda.

1. *Spain.* The examination of this subject postponed until paragraph 11, in connection with the recognition of the Italian Empire in Abyssinia, had been dealt with.

2. *Confirmation of the Mediterranean agreements of 1937 including the exchange of notes.*—I told Lord Perth that I saw no objection on our side to confirming what we had signed last year.

3. *Extension of the articles concerning the status quo in the Mediterranean to the other Mediterranean powers.*—Lord Perth reserved the right to advance a formula which would state that Italy and England would accept with pleasure a declaration by the Mediterranean Powers in accordance with paragraphs 4 and 5 of the 'gentlemen's agreement.' The paragraphs in question run as follows: 'The Kingdom of Italy and the Government of the United Kingdom . . . will not consider any proposal to modify or, as far as they are concerned, to see modified, the *status quo* as it affects the national sovereignty of the territories of the Mediterranean basin; they pledge themselves to respect their respective interests and rights in that area.'

I asked Lord Perth what idea was behind this suggestion by the English. He replied that it was simply an attempt to reach a guarantee for the maintenance of peace and equilibrium in the Mediterranean.

While reserving any reply until I had received orders from my Chief, I pointed out that an invitation of that nature opened the way to that Mediterranean Pact, which, by reason of its collective nature, is not considered sympathetically by the Italian Government. I added that we, on our side, had no need of a declaration of the sort in view of the agreements which bind us to the other Mediterranean States and which were completed after the signing of the 'gentlemen's agreement' by the Pact of Belgrade, which set the seal on the excellent relations existing between Italy and Yugoslavia. I finally pointed out that such a request to the other Powers would



be the subject of controversies where the Spanish Government was concerned, since, while we have formally recognised the Franco Government and only the Franco Government, the English on the other hand maintain official diplomatic relations with the Red Government. Lord Perth had to admit the strength of this last point and reserved the right to refer the matter to his Government.

4. *Italian Forces in Libya*.—Lord Perth began by saying that this is a question to which the British Government attaches the greatest importance. Without actually putting forward a specific and formal request the British Government asks an assurance from us that we will reduce the forces stationed in Libya. I replied to Lord Perth stating that I reserved any decision on the question for the Duce; I added in a personal capacity that the concentration of the forces in Libya must be considered as a result and not as a cause of the friction between Italy and Great Britain. The British Government had at one time concentrated the Home Fleet in the Mediterranean: military preparations had been answered by military preparations.

5. *Exchange of Military Information*.—This was a suggestion by His Excellency Count Grandi, which the British Government had received with sympathy, being willing to arrange a periodical exchange of information on the forces in the Mediterranean and Red Sea areas. As a preliminary it presented us with an *aide-mémoire*<sup>1</sup> concerning forthcoming moves of British forces.

6. *Naval Treaty*.—The British Government asks the Fascist Government to adhere to the Naval Treaty,<sup>2</sup> since it considers this would further a general settlement, and would have a great moral effect which it would be felt particularly strongly in the United States.

7. *Palestine*.—While the British Government undertakes to respect the interests of Italians in that region, it requests the cessation of the activity of Italian agents or agents in the service of Italy at present there, and wishes to obtain from the Italian Government an undertaking that it will abstain from any attempt to create difficulties for the British Government in its decisions on the policy towards Palestine and the administration of the country. In other words, Lord Perth said that Palestine must be excluded from the undertaking to maintain the *status quo* in the Mediterranean should changes take place in that area on the basis of the Peel Report.<sup>3</sup> On this point I expressed the greatest reserve.

<sup>1</sup>This consisted of two typewritten pages giving a list of (a) troops dispatched to Egypt, and (b) men and equipment dispatched to the R.A.F. in Egypt.

<sup>2</sup>The Naval Treaty of 25th March, 1936.

<sup>3</sup>The British Government had set up a Commission, under the chairmanship of Lord Peel, whose task it was to ascertain the causes of strife between Jews and Arabs in Palestine and to suggest ways of appeasement. On 30th June, 1937, the Government approved the report submitted by the Commission. It contained, *inter alia*, a plan for the partition of Palestine, according to which certain districts would remain under British mandate whilst the rest was to be divided between a Jewish and an Arab State.

8. Requests similar to those on Palestine are put forward on *Syria* also.

9. *Arabia*.—Lord Perth hands me a formula according to which the two Governments undertake, as far as they are concerned, not to do anything to disturb the territorial *status quo* in Arabia as well as to abstain from seeking privileged positions on the Arabian coasts of the Red Sea.

This formula is considered by Lord Perth to conform with the already existing agreements on the subject between Britain and Italy.

10. *Propaganda*.—Lord Perth states that he will later place before me a draft formula on the cessation of all anti-British propaganda activity. This formula will reach him from the Government in London.

11. *Abyssinian Question*.—(a) Recognition of the Empire.—Lord Perth hands me a formula which states: 'If agreement is reached on all the principal questions which exist between His Majesty's Government and the Italian Government, the British Government will, at the earliest opportune moment, take steps at Geneva to remove the obstacles to the recognition of Italian sovereignty in Abyssinia.'

Among the outstanding questions Lord Perth definitely places the Spanish question and says that the agreement may be regarded as reached when concrete progress has been made on the question of the evacuation of volunteers.

I pointed out to Perth that I seemed to distinguish a distinct difference between what he was communicating to me and what had previously been communicated to us by London. Unless I were mistaken Mr. Chamberlain had requested, in order to open conversations with us, a declaration that we accepted the British formula on volunteers. Such an acceptance had been given by us. Now, on the other hand, there was talk of substantial progress in the actual withdrawal of volunteers. That might cause a considerable delay, since the matter did not depend solely on us and on our good will, but on the good will of all members of the Non-Intervention Committee. I therefore asked Perth:

(1) What he meant precisely by concrete progress in the evacuation of volunteers; (2) What the British Government intended to do if a certain period of time elapsed between a possible agreement between the two Governments on the various points submitted for our examination and the solution of the Spanish problem; (3) When and how the British Government intended to raise the question of recognition of the Empire at Geneva.

On the first point Lord Perth replied that he was not in a position to give me precise information and that he would therefore in his turn raise the question with London; on the second point, he stated that any agreement reached between Italy and Britain could

be held in suspense until the moment when the solution requested to the Spanish problem had been reached; and that finally the British Government intended to raise the problem of recognition of the Empire at the next session of the Council of the League of Nations which will be held in Geneva next May.<sup>1</sup>

On all these points I expressed the utmost reserve. Lord Perth, too, reserved the right to ask further instructions from his Government.

(b) Frontiers of the Empire.—The British Government proposed to postpone the discussion on the fixing of the frontiers until after the recognition of Italian sovereignty in Abyssinia. In the meantime a good neighbour agreement could be reached.

(c) Lake Tana.—The British Government asks that we reaffirm our recognition of British interests in this region, as was done previously.<sup>2</sup>

(d) Recruiting of Armed Natives.—The British Government asks us to confirm the assurance given in our note sent to Geneva on 29th June, 1936, to the effect that Italy is in favour of accepting the principle that the natives should not be liable for other military service than that in the local police and for territorial defence.

(e) Treatment of Missionaries in Abyssinia.—The British Government asks that Article 11 of the Treaty of St. Germain be applied, which confers liberty for the spread of religion to missionaries of all denominations while placing them under the control of the police authorities and the local laws.

(f) General Interests of British Commerce in Abyssinia.—Just as the Commercial Treaty of 1883 applies to the Kingdom and the Colonies, the British Government asks that, once the legal recognition of the Empire has taken place, that treaty may be extended to the Empire.

Such are the points contained in the agenda. Finally Lord Perth raised the problem concerning the person of Tafari; while not wishing to include a matter of that nature in those officially put forward for discussion, Lord Perth gave me to understand that the British Government wishes to know our intentions with regard to the aforementioned gentleman.

I replied that I could not consider such a topic officially. I was therefore speaking in a purely personal capacity and began by saying that in Italy the deepest contempt is felt for this individual who, after having produced a conflict, deserted his post, removing money

<sup>1</sup>On 9th April the British Government did in fact send a letter to the Secretary-General of the League asking that the question of the consequences arising from the situation in Abyssinia be included in the agenda for the next session of the Council. The question was discussed on 12th May.

<sup>2</sup>On 3rd April, 1936, and again on 31st December of the same year the Italian Government had assured Britain that 'it was fully aware of its obligations towards the United Kingdom on the question of Lake Tana'. These obligations arose out of the rights which Great Britain had secured by her treaty of 15th May, 1902, with Abyssinia.

## CHAMBERLAIN TRIES AGAIN

and property belonging to the Abyssinian people. The fate of this deserter did not interest us. I therefore excluded in the most formal and absolute manner the possibility of the Italian Government's being in any way disposed to make any political concession where the ex-Negus was concerned, such as to allow him and his descendants to return to Abyssinia. Lord Perth asked if we would be willing to do anything towards meeting his economic needs. I said that this appeared a question of secondary importance and that it might perhaps be considered according to the attitude of Tafari.

I agreed with Lord Perth that a second meeting will take place when new and more detailed instructions have reached him.

*Before Ciano and Lord Perth met for the second time the Anschluss had become an accomplished fact. On 9th March, Schuschnigg had attended a rally of Fatherland Front leaders in Innsbruck and told his audience that four days later, on Sunday 13th March, a plebiscite would be held in which every Austrian would have the opportunity to cast his vote for or against the maintenance of the country's independence and sovereignty. This totally unexpected announcement had been received, by the great majority of the population, with enthusiasm and with full confidence in the outcome of the plebiscite, but within 24 hours after Schuschnigg's speech it had become clear, too, that Hitler would not permit an event to take place which would have demonstrated to the whole world Austria's refusal to be 'liberated' by the Nazis, and her determination to remain free. In the afternoon of 11th March a special envoy from Berlin had handed to the Austrian Government an ultimatum demanding, under threat of immediate invasion, the cancellation of the announced plebiscite and the replacement of Dr. von Schuschnigg's administration by a new Government under Seyss-Inquart. These demands had not been entirely unforeseen and earlier on that day the Austrian Government had, in fact, taken military measures to meet the German threat; Army reserves and men of the Militia had been called up and preparations made to defend the area bordering on Germany. However, the Federal President, Wilhelm Miklas, with whom the final decision rested, was not a man of strong determination, and though some of his advisers had urged him to remain firm and had pointed out that armed resistance might alter the whole course of events because even Hitler would find it difficult to wage war on a country which he had so often claimed to be 'German', the President had decided, in the end, for submission. Schuschnigg himself had made last-minute efforts to obtain intervention by foreign Powers, but his frantic appeals to Rome, Paris, London, Prague and Budapest had been fruitless. Only the Hungarians had shown full sympathy, but they, too, had refused to commit themselves, and had asked for time to consider the Chancellor's request for immediate military*

## CHAMBERLAIN TRIES AGAIN

*assistance—and time there was none. Shortly before 8 o'clock in the evening of 11th March Schuschnigg made his farewell to the Austrian people and announced personally over the radio his resignation. He was soon followed at the microphone by Seyss-Inquart, who informed the country that he had formed a new Government consisting exclusively of 'German-minded' men, i.e. Nazis and crypto-Nazis. But even before this announcement was made Seyss-Inquart, acting upon previous instructions from Berlin, had sent a telegram asking the Reich Government to dispatch troops 'to maintain order' in Austria. Next morning at dawn the advance guards of the German army of occupation crossed the Austrian frontier on every available road, for the purpose, as the German official announcement said, of paying Austria 'a friendly visit'. At the same time German bomber squadrons roared over Vienna. It was the end.*

*Mussolini heard of the impending momentous event only a few hours before it was due to happen. On 11th March Prince Philip of Hesse had arrived in Rome by air with a personal message from Hitler which conveyed 'the news of a decision which seems to have been dictated by circumstances and is now inalterable', and, further, the assurance that the Fuehrer regarded Germany's new frontier on the Brenner as final. Thus faced with a virtual fait accompli, the Duce preferred to be 'out of town and not available' when Schuschnigg later in the afternoon tried to reach him by telephone. This readiness to oblige his Axis partner was rewarded with a telegram containing Hitler's assurance that he would 'never forget'.*

*In the morning of the 12th Lord Perth returned to the Palazzo Chigi for a second meeting on the preliminaries to an Anglo-Italian agreement.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 12th March, 1938—XVI*

This morning at eleven o'clock there took place the second conversation with the British Ambassador, Lord Perth.

Returning to certain points in the discussion which had taken place previously, he informed me that:

1. The British Government was not yet in a position to inform me precisely what it understood by 'substantial progress' in the withdrawal of volunteers. Lord Perth would give me a fuller explanation at the earliest possible moment. I, for my part, replied that when we signified our acceptance of the British formula, we had done so in full good faith and with the best will in the world. It was therefore our aim to be able to put into practice what had been agreed on in principle. But I pointed out to the British Ambassador that the work of the Non-Intervention Committee was not a matter which depended on us or on them alone, and that

## CHAMBERLAIN TRIES AGAIN

therefore to make the results of the Anglo-Italian conversations depend on the amount of progress made in the Committee itself might present grave disadvantages. Lord Perth agreed and said that the British Government is devoting its attention to this very point.

2. As regards the reserve expressed by me on the advisability of inviting the other Mediterranean powers to show their support for the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, Lord Perth informed me that the British Government has decided to put this question aside for the time being. I suggested that, since I considered that Italian opposition on this point was final, the British Government should not attempt to return to this proposal.

Lord Perth finally put forward a proposed formula concerning the exchange of military information.<sup>1</sup> I said that I would submit it to our military experts for examination.

Lord Perth also told me that Mr. Rendel, a British expert on Palestinian, Syrian and Arab questions, will arrive in Rome at the beginning of next week. He will make contact with our representative whom I designated in the person of Signor Guarneschelli.<sup>2</sup> I agreed with Lord Perth that at the beginning of next week we shall begin the point by point examination of the questions to be discussed.

I called the attention of Lord Perth to the fact that England proposes to submit the question of the Empire to the Council of the League of Nations. I asked what England's programme was should the Council make difficulties. Lord Perth said he was not in a position to reply, but that at all events the British Government assumed complete responsibility for the solution of that problem.

Before leaving, Lord Perth asked what our attitude was to the Austrian situation and handed to me the attached copy of the telegram addressed to the British Ambassador in Berlin by the Foreign Office.<sup>3</sup>

I also informed him of the arrival of a personal message from the Fuehrer to the Duce containing some very important points on the Austrian question, particularly with regard to relations between Germany and Italy.

<sup>1</sup>According to this formula the two Governments were to exchange, annually, information regarding any proposed redistribution of their respective armed forces in those of their overseas possessions which were bordered by the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and also in certain parts of the African interior. The same was to apply to decisions regarding the establishment of new naval or air bases in the eastern Mediterranean or in the Red Sea and its approaches.

<sup>2</sup>Gianbattista Guarneschelli, Italian diplomat, deputy director-general of political affairs in the Foreign Ministry.

<sup>3</sup>The telegram which bore the date London, 12th, 23.59 hrs. requested the Ambassador to point out immediately to the German Government that, if their information was correct, H.M. Government felt it its duty to protest in the strongest terms against the use of coercion accompanied by force against an independent State with the aim of creating a situation incompatible with its national independence. It went on to say that Ribbentrop (who was in London at the time) had already been told that such action was liable to produce the gravest reactions whose development it was impossible to foresee, and that the French Government was being informed about the protest, in case they intended to take similar action.

CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH  
AMBASSADOR.*Rome, 16th March, 1938—XVI*

Yesterday the third conversation with the Ambassador, Lord Perth, took place. He brought with him Mr. Rendel, an expert in Arab and Palestinian problems. I put him into contact with our officials to discuss these questions in detail.

Lord Perth handed me the formulæ proposed by the English on the subjects of propaganda, the treatment of missionaries in Abyssinia, Lake Tana and British trade in the Empire. I stated that I would examine them at a later date and that I would submit them to the Duce for consideration.

I then discussed with Lord Perth point 1 on the agenda—that is, Spain. He again repeated his proposal for the withdrawal of the forces from the Balearics. I replied that we had no land forces in the Balearics. He referred to the air force. I said that this is a topic which has never been discussed by the Non-Intervention Committee and not included in the British formula for the withdrawal of volunteers; it ought not, therefore, to be raised in the course of the Anglo-Italian conversations. Lord Perth dropped the subject. He then asked to be able to repeat to his Government the assurance that Italy is not sending and will not send new drafts of volunteers to Spain. I confirmed this. He further asked me to confirm the assurance given at the time of the 'gentlemen's agreement' that once victory has been won by Franco's troops Italy does not intend to maintain military forces in Spain. I confirmed this.

Since no formula has yet been proposed on Spain, we went on to examine the other points.

Both Lord Perth and myself expressed our agreement with point 2 on the agenda—that is to say the confirmation of the 'gentlemen's agreement' as contained in the agreement of 2nd January, 1937.

By mutual consent there was no further talk of sending invitations to third powers asking them to express their support for the maintenance of the *status quo*.

Italian forces in Libya—Lord Perth told me that British public opinion attaches the greatest importance to this question. The British Government points out to the Fascist Government its desire to see our forces in Libya suitably reduced. According to information in possession of the British Government there are at present in Libya two metropolitan Corps and one native Corps. The British Government would desire one Corps to be withdrawn or very sensibly reduced in strength. The Ambassador added that even a limited withdrawal during the course of negotiations would be of great assistance to his Government in dealing with public opinion.

I told Lord Perth that the Fascist Government was in principle willing to take into consideration the possibility of reducing those

## CHAMBERLAIN TRIES AGAIN

forces, but that I was not in a position to give him any answer before having received precise instructions from the Duce.

On points 5 and 6 dealing with the exchange of military information and our adhesion to the Naval treaty,<sup>1</sup> I told Lord Perth that I am waiting to learn the suggestions of the experts and the decision of the Duce.

I agreed with the British Ambassador to meet again on Friday at 6.30 p.m. to continue the discussion.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 24th March, 1938—XVI*

The Ambassador, Phillips, called to present an invitation in the name of his Government to join in the formation of an International Committee for the purpose of facilitating the emigration from Austria and Germany of political refugees.

I replied to the Ambassador that, while I would inform the Duce when I thought fit, I considered that I could give a most definite and categorical refusal to a move which was at variance not only with the directives governing our international activity, but even more so with our political morality.

The American Ambassador noted my reply and said that it would not, however, be understood by the American Government which is animated by 'high and noble humanitarian aims'.

Continuing with the conversation, the Ambassador asked me for information on the situation in Spain with particular reference to the impression produced in the United States by the bombing of Barcelona.<sup>2</sup>

I replied on the lines of my answer to Lord Perth on 20th instant.

At his request I also supplied him with vague indications of the progress of the Anglo-Italian conversations, and he repeatedly told me the American Government attaches the utmost importance to the favourable outcome of these conversations.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 26th March, 1938—XVI*

Lord Perth gave me a memorandum<sup>3</sup> in which he asks permission

<sup>1</sup>The Naval Treaty of 25th March, 1936.

<sup>2</sup>On 20th March the French and British Governments had addressed to the Franco Government a protest note on the air-raids on Barcelona, bringing up the question of the bombing of civilian targets.

<sup>3</sup>In this memorandum it was pointed out that many members of the House of Commons distrusted Italy's true intentions towards Spain, and that it would greatly assist the Foreign Secretary's efforts to dispel that distrust and to create an atmosphere



## CHAMBERLAIN TRIES AGAIN

for the British Secretary of State to make a statement to the effect that we have renewed the assurance concerning the complete withdrawal from Spain at the conclusion of the war of volunteers as well as of all war materials. At my request he specified that war materials sold or otherwise granted to Generalissimo Franco are not comprised in this request.

He would further like to request the publication of a diplomatic statement designed to express satisfaction at the references made by the Prime Minister regarding the assurances already given by the Italian Government as well as the intention of that Government to carry out any undertakings entered into by it.<sup>1</sup>

I reserved a reply until after receiving instructions from the Duce.

He then handed me a formula dealing with the introduction to the Protocol. This formula, which appears to be acceptable in principle, contains a reservation on the date by which the document must come into force. That date is to be fixed when the British and Italian Governments have carried out their respective undertakings on the recognition of the Empire and on the withdrawal of volunteers from Spain.

On the subject of the recognition of the Empire, Lord Perth pointed out that his Government could not accept the formula proposed by us containing the phrase 'the British Government considers the Abyssinian question to be closed'. That would be interpreted as a full recognition *de jure* and would call forth grave opposition to the Government in Parliamentary circles and would perhaps also make a solution more difficult at Geneva.

Lord Perth advanced the following proposals:

1. The document should not contain any clause referring to Spain and to the question of the recognition of the Empire.
2. These two questions should be the subject of an exchange of letters between myself and Lord Perth to be made public simultaneously with the publication of the agreement.
3. Perth's letter on the recognition of the Empire would be drawn up more or less in the terms of the first formula proposed by the English. In confirmation of it the British Government would at the same time inform the press of its request to have the solution of the Abyssinian question included in the agenda of the Council of the League of Nations.

favourable to the conclusion of the Italo-British agreement if he were in a position to assure the House, on the strength of Ciano's formal undertaking, that all Italian volunteers and war material would be withdrawn from Spanish territory as soon as the civil war in Spain was ended.

<sup>1</sup>A note meeting that request was in fact published on 27th March, three days after Chamberlain had spoken in the House of Commons, with optimistic references to the Anglo-Italian negotiations. The note expressed satisfaction and reaffirmed the Italian Government's intention to withdraw the legionary forces from Spain as soon as the French and Russians had taken similar steps.

#### CHAMBERLAIN TRIES AGAIN

4. Our letter on Spain should be drawn up in terms of the formula already practically agreed to.

I reserved any reply until after instructions from the Duce.

Lord Perth again drew attention to the advisability of a withdrawal of a certain number of troops from Libya, and informed me that his Government will consider the reduction of our two corps at a later date from war-time to peace-time strength satisfactory.

Lord Perth spoke to me about the Abyssinian refugees in the British colonies and of some Eritrean and Italian deserters who are on British colonial territory. He asked me what their fate would be in view of the fact that some of them had expressed the wish to return to Europe.

I replied that as far as the deserters were concerned we would not fail to apply the law in all its rigour; as far as the refugees were concerned, on the other hand, I would approach the Minister for the Colonies (not being at the moment in a position to give an answer myself), but that in principle I considered that the treatment accorded would vary from case to case according to the personal position and the responsibility of each refugee.

Lord Perth then drew my attention to the anti-French propaganda being put out by Bari. I replied that it did not seem to me that this question entered into the agenda of our discussions.

Lord Perth expressed agreement and stated that he had mentioned it to me merely in an informatory manner.

Other questions of secondary importance were then dealt with.

## XVI

# CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANSCHLUSS

15th April—2nd May, 1938.

### CONVERSATION WITH THE YUGOSLAV MINISTER.

Rome, 15th April, 1938—XVI

I had a conversation with the Minister, Christic,<sup>1</sup> who has returned from Belgrade. In Stoyadinovitch's name he was anxious to express thanks for the Art Exhibition which has had even greater success than had been expected and has contributed greatly towards rendering friendship with Italy popular. Christic states that he himself has in fact noticed during the last few months that under the pressure of recent political events Yugoslav public opinion has turned towards our country with the most marked and sincere sympathy.

Stoyadinovitch wishes to meet me next summer; in order to do so he plans to come and spend a few days in Venice or at some other Italian coastal resort in order to make the meeting absolutely spontaneous in character.

The *Anschluss* has caused no noticeable disturbance in Yugoslav political life, although there were strong repercussions in public opinion, offset in part by the existence of the understanding with Italy. Stoyadinovitch personally had long foreseen the event and is completely undisturbed by German intentions—at least for what must, if one is making a political and not a historical judgment, be regarded as a considerable period of time. On the occasion of his last journey to Berlin, too, he had the pleasure of hearing the Fuehrer repeat that he considered Germany's frontiers with Italy and with Yugoslavia 'sacred'. There have been certain unpleasant repercussions among the German minorities in view of the fact that some more intolerant elements have raised their heads and have begun a type of propaganda which Yugoslavia does not intend to tolerate. It is recognised, however, that the German Government is in no way connected with that activity. The Yugoslavs agree with us in believing that the German Government must not however remain passive towards such irredentist movements but must stifle them at birth by some forceful gesture.

<sup>1</sup>Bozko Christic, Minister Plenipotentiary to Rome; previously held the same post at the Hague.

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANSCHLUSS

Stoyadinovitch intends to continue in the future that policy followed in the past—relations of very good neighbourliness with Germany, close, cordial and profound understanding with Italy.

The Yugoslav Minister then desired to learn our attitude in the event of a German move with regard to Czechoslovakia. I answered that we did not consider the Czechoslovak question to be one that interested us directly, and we did not anticipate taking any action.

The Minister said that Stoyadinovitch intends to bring his policy into complete harmony with ours and to follow an identical line of conduct. He is of the opinion that Germany will sooner or later proceed to the annexation of the Sudetenland, that Hungary and Poland will settle their scores with Prague and that the outcome will be the creation of a small Czech state with a neutral character. Stoyadinovitch raised no objections to a plan of that nature and does not intend to take any action. He asks us to consider this view of his as strictly confidential.

I finally informed the Minister of the results of the Anglo-Italian negotiations and Christic, in the name of his Government, expressed his congratulations on an event which Yugoslavia considers will greatly help peace in Europe.

*For all its eagerness to please its German partner the Italian Government could not entirely ignore the fact that the Anschluss, and particularly the ruthless manner in which it had been brought about, had upset and alarmed Italian public opinion to a considerable degree, and this was one of the reasons why Rome soon undertook steps to obtain a settlement of the many questions connected with Italian interests in Austria. These interests—Austro-Italian economic co-operation had greatly developed during the preceding years—concerned the State as well as numerous companies and private individuals, and the thoroughness with which the Germans proceeded from the first to exploit their new 'Austrian colony', putting their hands on the most valuable assets whilst refusing to recognise liabilities, imperilled the rights and the property of 'friends and allies' hardly less than those of the Austrians themselves. The Italians, presenting their claims, found little evidence on the German side of that good will to which they thought they were entitled, and the Fascist Government had to employ all its energy before any results could be achieved.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR.

*Rome, 24th April, 1938—XVI*

I received this evening the Ambassador, von Mackensen, who made the following statement:

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANSCHLUSS

(The statement was in French.)

'I followed the telegram of which I spoke to Your Excellency last time by another in order to inform Berlin of our last conversation and to stress the fact that the Duce is dealing with the question personally and is very anxious that matters develop in such a manner as not to harm Italian interests in Austria. Herr von Ribbentrop himself dealt with the question and has just instructed me by telegram which arrived this morning to communicate the following to you and to ask you to inform His Excellency the Duce.

'It goes without saying that with regard to the steps to be taken in Austria to bring into accord measures in force in Germany as it was formerly and those in force in Austria, we are entirely disposed to respect Italian interests as far as possible. In all cases where for reasons of absolute necessity it would scarcely be possible to avoid touching these interests, we will postpone such measures until Italy has an opportunity of discussing them with us on the occasion of the talks which are about to open. For this reason we are anxious that these discussions should begin not later than 9th May.

'The programme we sent to Rome is merely a list of particularly interesting points for discussion which, of course, leaves Italy full liberty to indicate on her side all those points which are of particular interest to her.

'With regard to the question of the declaration of foreign assets, we have again postponed the date to after May 9th, that is to say, the moment when discussions are due to start, and have thereby shown our willingness to find a common solution even if there are in this case, on our side, matters of very grave concern and questions of principle affecting our economy.

'Similarly the postponement of tariff measures in Austria until the opening of discussions with Italy is causing us very serious losses and is preventing us from setting up unified tariffs in the interest of peaceful economic development. It is for that reason that we very much hope that the discussions which we have proposed should be held on the 25th at Munich will lead to an agreement on details.'

*The German attitude towards the obligations which the Reich had incurred by the annexation of Austria was most clearly expressed in a speech of the Reich Minister for Economics, Walter Funk. Addressing a meeting of representatives of Austria's creditors Funk had the impudence to declare that 'the overthrow of this regime (i.e. the destruction of Austria as a political entity) by a unanimous manifestation of the will of the Austrian people' constituted a transformation so radical in nature that it was not possible to establish a juridical link between the previous constitutional system and that obtaining since the Anschluss. Nevertheless, after two months of arduous negotiations between Rome and Berlin a series of agreements were reached—and signed on 28th May—which*

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANSCHLUSS

covered the whole complex of Austro-Italian financial, economic and traffic relations that had been affected by the annexation.

However, though these problems were now to be regarded as settled the Italian Foreign Minister was not willing to consider the matter as closed also in the political field. In Ciano's view Italy was *viv-à-vis* the Reich in the position of a creditor, but he realised that her credit was not likely to increase in the course of the following months and he therefore thought it advisable to create as soon as possible an opportunity for settling accounts. Such an opportunity Ciano hoped to find by attending the forthcoming wedding of Ahmed Zog, King of Albania, whose marriage to the Hungarian countess, Geraldine Apponyi, could be taken as an indication that he intended to disengage himself, at least within certain limits, from Italian tutelage. With this question in mind Ciano, as Italy's representative, proceeded to Tirana, and it was in the Albanian capital that he prepared, with the assistance of a large staff of advisers and experts, the plan that was to produce in the following year an Italian pendant to the Anschluss.

After his return Ciano submitted a lengthy written report to the Duce. In his memorandum, dated the 2nd May, the event which had provided the occasion for the visit to Albania, namely the royal wedding, was barely mentioned. Much space, however, was devoted to an enumeration of that country's natural resources—real or imaginary—and to the advantages Italy could derive from their exploitation. Attention was further drawn to the fact that in ancient times Albania had been densely populated; now it was practically uninhabited, but as a result of Italian enterprise and organisation the present population of approximately one million could well be doubled or even trebled.

After this introduction which presented Albania as a very worthwhile objective for an Italian imperialistic drive, Ciano went on to suggest various methods which could be used to draw that country into the Roman orbit. The King and the Royal family, he explained, were highly unpopular; Zog was accused of 'nepotism and money-grabbing' and the flashy extravagance of his sisters as well as the high cost of the royal wedding were much resented. The Italians, on the other hand, were distinctly popular wherever they had contact with the natives, and the Army, too, was Italophile with few exceptions. It would, however, be a mistake to overlook the strong traces of former Austrian influence in Albania, and the danger that Germany, reinforced by the Anschluss,—though the Anschluss had certainly not increased pro-German sympathies among the Albanians—might attempt to take and expand the political and economic positions which (Imperial) Austria once held in that country. This danger as well as Italy's prestige and interests all pointed to the necessity of an operation which would have to be carried out at the opportune moment: the annexation of Albania.

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANSCHLUSS

*Many Albanians—according to the memorandum—were beginning to regard such an 'operation' as probable and perhaps inevitable; some, and they were 'not the worst', even desired it. Like their ancestors, who willingly served the Turkish Sultan, 'the better section of the Albanian youth'—the others did not count, in Ciano's view—would gladly welcome the opportunity of service under the Fascist Empire which could offer them a career and a future unattainable in their own small country. Another favourable factor was the utter inefficiency of the Albanian Army whose training was in the hands of an Italian military mission. In order further to reduce the possibility of armed resistance to the proposed coup it would be advisable to increase 'discreetly' the number of Italian military instructors 'with the specific mission to create annexionist cells' in the Albanian Army. Preparation for that coup should, further, include intensified economic and cultural infiltration. Every new centre of Italian interest, every addition to the number of Italian residents and of Albanians on the Italian pay roll would be of value. To win the upper classes for the idea of union with Italy 'our agents'—to use Ciano's own words—'should work discreetly on a personal basis with expressions of mutual interest, with promises, and with corruption'.*

*Though Ciano referred in his memorandum to the eventuality of having to share the prospective Albanian spoils with Greece and Yugoslavia—the lion's share was in any case to be reserved for Italy—he made it quite clear that calculated annexation, without the participation of other countries, should be the goal. Even so he was careful to point out that a friendly understanding with, or 'better still the complicity of' Yugoslavia would be essential for the success of the enterprise.*

*Ciano anticipated no difficulties in producing a suitable pretext for the suggested invasion of Albania. It would merely be necessary to exploit the existing dissension between Court and people, and to foment and aggravate these conflicts 'by suitable means'; this would be an easy task. Nor would it be difficult to have the Albanian Italophiles ask the Italian Government for intervention 'to restore order', and then—'order' having been restored—to 'persuade' them to offer the Albanian crown to the King of Italy. Following the acceptance of this offer the final step would be 'to give the affair validity by means of a plebiscite or something of the kind; a procedure after the manner of the Anschluss.'*

*Ciano concluded his memorandum with a surprisingly frank reference to Italy's rather unhappy military history. Though hardly tactful this note fulfilled its purpose by flattering the vanity of a man who longed to see himself in the Cæsarian role of a great conqueror and military leader. 'Albania, which saw the destinies of the Roman Empire decided on the plain of Crüa (battle of Pharsalus, 48 B.C.) between Cæsar and Pompey, reminds us that in recent times Italian*

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANSCHLUSS

*troops withdrew hard-pressed by the ragged bands of Malissori and that the retreat was so hasty as to resemble [sic] flight.<sup>1</sup> In spite of all that has happened since, this picture has remained in the minds of too many Albanians, and it is a memory which tells against us still. The Duce will see to it that it is obliterated, just as he obliterated others<sup>2</sup> of the same nature and of greater seriousness.'*

<sup>1</sup>During the latter part of the first World War, when both Austrian and Italian armies had invaded Albania, many Albanian tribesmen sided with the Austrians, and it was partly due to the prowess of these 'ragged bands', ill-disciplined and unreliable though they often were, that the Italians were thrown from the hills and had to seek refuge in their fortified camps of Durazzo and Valona.

<sup>2</sup>A reference, presumably, to the Italian rout at Adowa, in the Abyssinian campaign of 1896, and possibly also to the debacle of Karfreit (Caporetto) in October, 1917.



## XVII

### EUROPEAN TENSION

18th May, 1938—20th August, 1938.

*The Anglo-Italian negotiations were concluded on 1st April with the signing of an agreement, later referred to as the Easter Agreement, because it was signed on the eve of that festival. It was not, however, laid down when it would come into force. That depended on the fulfilment of two conditions: the recognition of the Abyssinian Empire by one of the signatory Powers, and the clarification of its attitude towards Spain by the other. As to the former, the British Government had on 9th April sent a letter to the Secretary-General of the League, asking that the question of the consequences arising from the situation in Abyssinia be placed on the agenda for the next session of the Council. As a result the Council approved, on 12th May, a formula conforming in substance with the British proposal that the members of the League should be free to recognise, or not to recognise, the Italian conquest. It seemed, therefore, that nothing remained in the way of final elimination of this much debated issue between Rome and London when there came Mussolini's speech in Genoa on 14th May. It was at the time when the first Czech crisis was coming to a head; Europe was full of rumours of German troop concentrations on the Czech frontier, of military measures by France, which was bound to Prague by a treaty of alliance. At Genoa Mussolini extolled the collaboration between the Nazi and Fascist revolutions which were 'destined to leave their imprint on this century', but he also referred again and again to the sanctions 'which we have not yet forgotten', and to the fact that between 1934 and 1938 'much water had flowed under the bridges over the Tiber, the Danube, the Spree, the Thames and the Seine'. Speaking of the recent Anglo-Italian agreement, he observed that 'the last speech pronounced by the British Prime Minister was an attempt to escape from the tangle of commonplaces and to recognise Fascist Italy in all its majesty and might', but the Duce's phraseology was even more unfortunate when he came to the topic of Italy's conversations with France, which had begun a few days before with a meeting between Ciano and Blondel. Admitting that such conversations were in progress, he declared: 'I do not know if they will reach a conclusion, if for no other reason, because in an operation which is very much to the fore, that is the war in Spain, we are on opposite sides of the barricade. They desire the victory of*

*Barcelona; we, on the other hand, desire the victory of Franco.' This was sufficient to render impossible the fulfilment of the second condition for the entry into force of the agreements of 16th April; even if one overlooked the now customary final threat that if the 'so-called great democracies' were really preparing an ideological war, the totalitarian states would immediately form a bloc and would march together to the end.*

## CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR.

Rome, 18th May, 1938—XVI

I received the British Ambassador who told me he had received instructions from his Government to speak to me as a result of the speech made by the Duce at Genoa.

He must first state that the communication was to be considered a proof of the extraordinary importance which the British Government attached to the agreement reached with Italy; and it was precisely because of this importance that the Government in London was anxious about the results which the speech had had not only in England and France, but throughout Europe.

Mussolini had spoken for the first time since the signing of the Anglo-Italian agreement. In England it had been explained and praised by Chamberlain, while Halifax had done the same at Geneva. The initiative had been immediately taken by Britain—with the support of the French delegate—to remove the obstacles to recognition of the Empire. The British Government now felt it its duty to let it be known that the expressions used by the Duce were not those which had been expected in London.

In a personal capacity, Lord Perth added that it had been hoped that the Duce would express himself publicly as he had done to him, that the agreement was of great importance for relations between the two countries and was fundamental to the pacification of Europe.

It must not be forgotten that Chamberlain has encountered very serious parliamentary difficulties in order to bring about the agreement with Italy and that even today the opposition has not been disbanded. The chief argument used by Chamberlain to support his policy was that the agreement would contribute effectively towards improving the European situation.

Another hope which inspired the British Government was that the agreement between Italy and England would facilitate an understanding between Rome and Paris. The Genoa speech has made a profound impression on the French Government and Chamberlain is not blind to the fact that this hoped for *détente* is now becoming more difficult. In this way he fears that the Government which will

score the greater success will be the Soviet one in view of the fact that Moscow has striven at Geneva and elsewhere to raise any obstacle to prevent a *rapprochement* between Italy and France.

Both Chamberlain and Halifax have requested Lord Perth to inform us that they eagerly desire to see the difficulties which have arisen in the Franco-Italian negotiations overcome and that their actions are and will always be directed towards preventing the establishment of blocs based on opposing ideologies.

I replied to Lord Perth that as far as Great Britain was concerned I was surprised at what he had communicated to me. The statements of the head of the Government had been cordial with regard to his country and contained a high tribute to the Anglo-Italian Agreement. I saw no divergence between the phrases used publicly by the Duce at Genoa and those spoken to Lord Perth on the occasion of the conversation of 14 April. I further explained the question of the ill-timed applause of the children and the misunderstanding to which the hilarity of a section of the public might have given rise.

As far as France is concerned, however, I informed Perth that the Duce took a very firm stand on the position he had assumed which is as follows: the word 'Spain' must not, for any reason or in any way, enter into any possible agreement between Italy and France; second, that he does not intend to transform into a three power agreement the bilateral one on the Red Sea and Arabia.

Dwelling particularly on the first point I drove home all the reasons which have induced the Duce to take up such an attitude, which must be considered final. The British Government if it really wishes to make a contribution to the progress of the Franco-Italian negotiations, must make Paris understand that on the question of Spain the Duce does not intend to modify in any way the attitude assumed from the beginning of the conversations.

Perth, who personally showed a clear understanding of the Italian point of view, will in due course report to his Government.

*During the following days events in Czechoslovakia drew the attention of all the European Chancelleries. With the imminence of the Czech municipal elections which acquired a particular political importance because since 19th May, 1935, no expression of popular opinion had taken place, Czechoslovakia's internal and international situation rapidly became tense. Prague moved troops to the German frontier and recalled a class of reservists. Paris was put in a state of alarm, and Poland seemed to be holding itself in readiness to profit from any possible clash between Czechoslovakia and Germany, and not in any case to be averse to fanning the flames in her own interests. May 21st marked the peak of the crisis. Czech soldiers killed two Sudeten Germans in Eger; reprisals were feared, and direct intervention by the Reich was considered probable. It was then that London made a move.*